GOVERNMENT OF ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA

Statement for the Second Regular Session of the Executive Board of UNDP/UNFPA and UNOPS

on behalf of CARICOM

by

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Check against delivery
Mr. President,
Executive Director,
Executive Board Members
Colleagues,

I deliver this statement on behalf of the fourteen Member States of the Caribbean Community, CARICOM.

At the outset Mr. President, it is a pleasure to see you once again presiding over the meeting of the Executive Board. CARICOM notes your continued leadership and direction, which has helped to saturate positive discussions that the organization needs given the challenging development environment.

We wish to thank the Executive Director, Dr. Babatunde Osotimehin for presenting the report of UNFPA and in particular detailing aspects of funding, which are critical components in the effective operation of UNFPA. The group recognizes the growth and achievements of UNFPA guided by your leadership and the hard work by the rest of the UNFPA’s team in guaranteeing optimal delivery of results.

Mr. President,
CARICOM is pleased with the continued growth and development of our region with the assistance of development partners and agencies, and in particular UNFPA. Irrespective of the aforementioned there is sufficient evidence to conclude that our region is still extremely vulnerable to internal and external shocks; the slow and very complex global financial recovery, climate change and the challenges we are facing with diseases such as Zika; only continue to exaggerate challenges and unique circumstances as Small Island Developing States and in particular to our region as CARICOM.

On the specific affairs of UNFPA in our region, we continue to experience high fertility rates, high mortality rates, worrisome HIV/AIDS increase, and the onslaught of new threats that hinders our full development capacity including high unemployment and economic uncertainties. These are therefore why the nexus between population and development continues to remains high on our regional agenda and I implore UNFPA to continue to assist with and focus on these areas within our region.

Unemployment, which has been a prolonged feature of most CARICOM countries, is reaching levels that may threaten socio-economic-political stability and as we have seen all too often, can result in uncontrollable migration issues. It is because of these socio economic challenges why our region is experiencing increases in crime, substance abuse, and gender based violence.

While there are many challenges that confront our region, with effective partnerships with UN agencies and in particular UNFPA, these challenges can be addressed. In this context, our developmental concerns have to be addressed in order for us to achieve the desired thresholds for our populations. A more just and equitable international enabling environment is required and these issues, must be aligned with the agenda of UNFPA.

Mr. President,
In order for UNFPA to be an effective agency, core funding should continue to be its bedrock; core funding is guaranteed and is free from conditions imposed by the donor base. The group notes the decrease of UNFPA’s contribution revenue for regular and co-financing resources; we therefore appeal for strategies that will shoulder a positive upswing of regular resources, creating a steady, reliable and expanded resource base.
The continued decrease in funding should not impact the already minimal resource allocation to our sub-regional office. We are cognizant of the serious financial limitations of the agency; however our concern continues to be the inequitable allocation of resources to our sub-region given our unique challenges as being small developing states that are highly indebted. Notwithstanding the aforementioned, recognition must be given to UNFPA for trying to address these financial shortfalls by being more focused and aligning resources in trying to avoid duplication of programmes and activities. Unfortunately, not all alignments benefit our sub-region ideally, and we urge greater care in addressing the distinctive nature of our sub-region in comparison to the wider Caribbean.

Our region sees the critical importance of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and having the ICPD integrated in our national development strategies and plans, the Samoa pathway and the 2030 Agenda, for this we need the full support of UNFPA and it appears the budgetary decrease affects the implementation and harmonization of each of the above mentioned. The ICPD Review of the Caribbean re-affirmed that UNFPA has made substantive contributions to the region and this has to be maintained.

CARICOM recognizes the importance of mobilizing domestic resources for the achievement of a better quality of life for our people. It is in this spirit that our governments has intensified their efforts in population development initiatives, we are spearheading these initiatives in conjunction with the CARICOM Secretariat despite serious limitations on our domestic resources and competing development priorities.

Mr. President,
CARICOM continues to be concerned with the shift of human resources and capabilities from the sub-regional office, our region is distinctive and thus the human capabilities within our sub-region should reflect the realities and present challenges of our region. Staff cuts and reassignment of workloads to the regional office in Panama, again presents slight concerns to us, any move of critical personnel from the sub regional office should be considered only when a suitable replacement is found.

CARICOM members continues to face the threat of the Zika virus, at this time, our final meeting of the board for 2016, I wish to emphasize the threat has amplified tremendously from affecting just a few of our Member States to now almost all CARICOM countries. We urge the agency to collaborate with other UN agencies to assist in putting prevention and treatable mechanisms in place as the virus has escalated to a crisis level for CARICOM countries.

In concluding Mr. President the activities of UNFPA in relation to CARICOM have proven over the years to be of crucial importance to the achievement of our desired developmental goals and principles. As a consequence, these activities have contributed to our common endeavor towards the full developmental of our peoples in particular, and in our development efforts in general, the success of which will reflect positively not just our population, but on the agency’s work globally. CARICOM therefore commits itself to continue to support the work of UNFPA during this and future sessions.

I Thank You.