

Minister Jonas Remarks – High Level ECLAC Panel 2022 Presiding Officers Meeting

Ladies and gentlemen, good morning. The regional gender agenda has significantly influenced the conceptualization, design and implementation of gender equality policies and programming in Antigua and Barbuda.

Antigua and Barbuda is a signatory to several international conventions and gender equality policy frameworks such as the convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Beijing platform for action and Belem do para, to name a few. These long standing and comprehensive conventions, which are aligned with the regional gender agenda, serve to ensure that the work of my ministry and our local gender machinery, is organized, strategic and effective.

The regional gender agenda in the past few years has prioritized critical issues such as climate change and its implications on the well-being of women and girls, gender based violence, women's leadership and political participation. Consequently, Antigua and Barbuda has engaged in many initiatives and programmes around these areas. We have worked along closely with our national disaster management agency to host workshops, training sessions and draft policy documents geared towards mainstreaming gender considerations into disaster management and we have built capacity with key stakeholders such as our meteorological actors, shelter managers, and environmental NGO's.

Additionally, to tackle gender based violence we continue to operate a one stop support and referral Centre for survivors in need of support, and are vigorously engaged in efforts to establish a national shelter, with support from corporate Antigua. This is one of our major priorities, as we seek to continue to strengthen or institutional capacity to respond to gender based violence. We are also finalizing our national workplace harassment and discrimination policy that will guide the public sector in Antigua and Barbuda.

As it relates to women's leadership and political participation, we established an emerging female leaders network, in which we provide participants with opportunities and capacity building sessions geared towards motivating them and providing them with the tools for future leadership. We have also partnered with various womens leadership groups, to execute activities geared towards catalyzing women's active participation as decision makers in our society.

The regional gender agenda provides a unique opportunity for all of our countries to achieve substantive and sustainable levels of gender equality, particularly in countries like mine, that are still finalizing policies such as our national gender policy and strategic gender based violence action plan. The absence of these policies mean that it can be more difficult to ensure that the actions we are taking are meeting the needs of vulnerable groups and of women and girls, and the regional gender agenda acts as a roadmap and blueprint for how to empower our women and girls, and provides insight into the critical and pervasive issues which require human, technical and financial resources to transform the respective areas identified.

I would like to thank the organizers for extending an invitation to me to participate in this panel and look forward to our continued efforts to advance the regional gender agenda both collectively and individually, so our societies can be more inclusive and equitable.