SECOND MOST REGIONAL FORUM OF MINISTERS OF SOCIAL AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

DECLARATION OF PORT OF SPAIN MAY 2012

"Promoting Equity and Social Inclusion: Pathways to Prosperity for All"

The Second UNESCO MOST Forum of Ministers of Social and Sustainable Development of the Caribbean meeting in Port of Spain, Trinidad from 21 to 23 May 2012,

Mindful of the 15 recommendations resulting from the First Regional Forum of Ministers of Social Development in the Caribbean held in January 2010 in Kingston, Jamaica and the status of their implementation in the region as well as commitment to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals;

Noting that the MOST Intergovernmental Council (IGC) in March 2011 decided to concentrate on two strategic priorities of Social Transformation: Social Inclusion and the Social Transformations arising from Global Environmental Change endorsed by the UNESCO Executive Board in May 2011 and the UNESCO General Conference in November 2011;

Welcoming the hosting of the second UNESCO/MOST meeting of Ministers of Social and Sustainable Development in the Caribbean in collaboration with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago which has provided a space for policy dialogue including engagement of the Latin American region, with "Fighting Poverty" as the thematic objective of the UNESCO MOST IGC for Latin America and the Caribbean;

Recognizing that in order to achieve equity, social inclusion and prosperity for all, high and persistent poverty and inequality in the Caribbean present an obstacle to human development and social progress;

Recognizing the importance of evidence-based policy responses as the basis for effective social transformation within the current global context and the vital contribution of the UNESCO/MOST programme in promoting dialogue among policymakers, researchers, government and non-government organizations particularly through the convening of regional fora of Ministers of Social and Sustainable Development;

Also noting the 2010 research findings in the UNDP *Human Development Report for Latin America and the Caribbean* which states that the region has fallen into an "inequality trap";

Conscious that this Forum is being held in the very year of the 50th Anniversaries of Independence of Trinidad and Tobago and of Jamaica, as well as the 50th year of UNESCO's presence in the host country;

Notwithstanding the unequal character of the region, significant progress has been made in social achievements, that governments throughout the Caribbean have adopted a wide range

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of policies and programmes to address the challenges faced, particularly in the areas of increasing access to education, training and job creation, youth development and strengthening of social protection systems;

Realizing that significant gaps still exist between the diagnosis, policy statements, recommendations and their actual implementation as well as institutional arrangements to ensure effective coordination and a multi-sectoral approach;

Acknowledging that consideration must also be given to the varying levels of exclusion as well as to groups that have been historically marginalized;

Taking into consideration that the key needs identified for the region by this forum for the efficiency of efforts towards sustainable development are co-ordination, collaboration and communication, the recommendations of the Ministers for Social and Sustainable Development are intended to advance the regional development agenda and to synthesize and prioritize the various policy responses for promoting equity and social inclusion;

Recommends that the governments of the Caribbean region collaborate in order to advance the agenda for equity, social inclusion and prosperity for all and that the following policies be adopted for coherent and coordinated national and regional action:

Redefining the Blueprint for Social Policy in the Caribbean:

1. Social policies should recognize the importance of values for sustainable development
2. Policy objectives should be redefined to focus on a human rights-based approach
3. Programming should be more effective, flowing from sound policy making, based on empirical evidence, and should be child and gender-sensitive in order to gain a clearer understanding of the face of poverty
4. Countries should consolidate and rationalize social programmes for greater efficiency
5. Field exchanges should be encouraged among the countries in the region on social policy issues
6. Priority should be given to developing policies targeting key groups, for example the disabled, the mentally ill, the homeless and persons leaving care institutions such as prison and foster care
7. Any new model for social policy must emphasize quality over quantity.
8. Governments should commit to reserve a fixed percentage of their budgetary allocation to social programming
9. Set as priority programmes to promote social inclusion, equity and the reduction of poverty
10. Consider natural disasters as an area of concern when designing social programmes
11. Build in monitoring and evaluation mechanisms in social programming for accountability and transparency

Harnessing Resources Towards a Research Agenda

The Nexus between Research and Policy

1. Establish MOST research chairs in the universities in the region to facilitate the research- policy nexus
2. Member states should undertake a national level audit of government capacity to conduct evidence-based research and programming
3. Reaffirm efforts for strengthening data collection and research in country specific characteristics to develop a body of knowledge specific to the Caribbean
4. Examine the models and solutions used by Latin American countries and metropolitan regions for best practices and lessons learnt
5. Establish networks to bridge the gap between researchers and policy makers
6. Establish a network of social researchers
7. Seek to organize schools for young social researchers and young persons with responsibility for public policies similar to the MOST schools organised in Latin America
8. Devise mechanisms for OECS countries to benefit from the research conducted by other islands with tertiary level institutions
9. Promote innovative approaches to research
10. Commission studies on the cost to governments on social programming for vulnerable groups (on which accurate statistics are not readily available) over a protracted period of time
11. Commission studies on the profiles of vulnerable groups as these tend not to be homogenous and policies need to be developed to target differences

Capacity Building in Social Research

1. Promote orientation in the training of social workers
2. Develop a curriculum for training social development workers (include in the training, an understanding of development)
3. Strengthen human resource capacity in Monitoring and Evaluation
4. Create a system of mentorship to develop the capacity of researchers

A Caribbean Vision of Prosperity for All and Mechanisms for Effective Collaboration:

1. Pursue the affinity between social policy, economic and environmental policy to ensure sound economies which will redound to social development
2. Focus on addressing unemployment and poverty (specific attention to be given to strategies to ensure equity and social inclusion)
3. Expand creative industries across the region to promote prosperity
4. Explore new value added to Caribbean sport potential
5. Develop a clearer understanding of development as not only having to deal with economic development but also inclusive of people, society and governance

6. Greater corporate social responsibility towards poverty reduction initiatives should be encouraged
7. Promote the work of the Caribbean Invention and Innovation Centre (CIIC) in the region particularly at the 'grass roots' level
8. Celebrate Caribbean values through the recognition of a Caribbean day, week, month or year
9. Explore the potential of the Caribbean Diaspora for development beyond remittances
10. Further analysis of the concept of prosperity in the Caribbean context
11. Target small islands with an aim to promoting sustainable development
12. Establish a regional body or centre to deal specifically with social cohesion

Communication

1. Develop a virtual space to facilitate the sharing of information and the establishment of an online data base on social programmes
2. Make easily accessible to all stakeholders data and information obtained from research

Mechanisms to increase collaboration

1. To deepen the work of the troika as a monitoring mechanism for the dissemination of policy information within CARICOM
2. Strengthen the Directorate for Human and Social Development (COHSOD), in particular strengthen the role of the Implementation Support Project Group and the Management Office
3. Greater institutional collaboration between government, private sector and NGOs in deciding and establishing activities that support and promote equity and social inclusion
4. Exchange of best practices, expertise from lessons learnt
5. The representative from St. Kitts/Nevis offered to host the 3rd UNESCO MOST Meeting and will advise further. A confirmation is to be submitted in 2 months. Additionally the Ambassador from the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela has indicated her country's willingness to host the next meeting

The delegates recognized the importance of follow-up for implementation of the recommendations emanating from the Fora of Ministers of Social and Sustainable Development of the Caribbean and recommended the following:

1) All countries in the region should establish a MOST National Liaison Committee in collaboration with their National Commissions. The MOST National Liaison Committee in each country should take the lead as focal point in the coordination of the follow-up action. Focal points should reside within the public service in order to ensure continuity

of the process; MOST National Liaison Committee should be established within the government and should be given priority.

2) Each country through its MOST National Liaison Committee should address issues of communication internally as well as regionally and create or strengthen mechanisms to increase collaboration and enhance the nexus between research and policy; capacity building and effective design of relevant social programmes and share progress in these areas through the regional website to be established.

3) The Declaration and Report of the Forum would also be sent to the CARICOM Secretariat and Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) for consideration and discussion at HOG meetings with a view to implementation of the recommendations. The final declaration and the report of the 2nd MOST Forum meeting would be disseminated to all Member States of the CARICOM and their National Commissions for UNESCO within one (1) month of the Forum.

4) A Caribbean MOST Website should be established with the technical assistance of UNESCO MOST IGC; In the Case of the 2nd MOST Forum, the Trinidad and Tobago MOST National Liaison Committee will receive and compile the progress reports to be shared using new media. The President of the Second Forum, through the Trinidad and Tobago National Commission for UNESCO, will keep UNESCO IGC informed of progress in the region, with respect to the implementation of the recommendations until the hosting of he next Forum by monitoring follow up of recommendations. This would be the role of all subsequent Presidents.

5) Each country would be required to send updates on the progress of the recommendations arising from the previous year's MOST Forum of Ministers of Social and Sustainable Development on a bi-annual basis to the President of the previous Forum who would compile reports for dissemination to the identified focal groups/National Liaison Committees to be placed on relevant websites and for presentation to the forthcoming Forum.

6) At each MOST Forum of Ministers of Social and Sustainable Development of the Caribbean, a comprehensive report should be provided on the implementation of the recommendations of the previous forum. The former and current Presidents of the Troika would have the responsibility of compiling and presenting such a Report.

Ministers of Social and Sustainable Development
of the Caribbean
23 May 2012

The 2nd UNESCO MOST Forum of Ministers of Social and Sustainable Development of the Caribbean Signatories to the Declaration of Port-Of-Spain May 2012
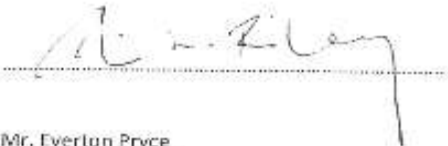
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