

# Ministerial Declaration

FIRST FORUM OF MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR SOCIAL AND SUSTAINABLE

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE CARIBBEAN

*SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES FOR THE CARIBBEAN*

*YOUTH IN THE CONTEXT OF THE GLOBAL CRISIS*

*Recognizing* the adverse impact of the global economic and social crises on vulnerable groups in the Caribbean particularly the youth population;

*Also recognizing* the importance of evidence-based policy responses within the current global context and the vital contribution of the UNESCO/MOST programme in promoting dialogue among researchers, policymakers, government and non-government organizations particularly through the convening of regional fora of Ministers of Social Development;

*Noting with approval* the 2006 Africa Youth Charter which provides an opportunity for South-South cooperation and knowledge transfer;

*Noting* the research undertaken on youth policies in the Caribbean region, including the Draft Report of the CARICOM Commission on Youth Development (CCYD);

*Recognizing* the many principles and statements on how to optimize youth engagement and development, including *the World Programme of Action for Youth to the Year 2000 and Beyond*, *the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Youth (2007-2015)*, and *the Commonwealth (Port of Spain) Declaration on Youth*;

*Welcoming* the hosting of the first UNESCO/MOST meeting of Caribbean Ministers of Social Development in collaboration with the Government of Jamaica which has provided a space for policy dialogue including engagement of the Ministers with youth representatives ;

*Recognizing* that this Forum is being held in the very year proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly as the International Year of Youth (resolution 64/134) and the convening of the World Youth Conference in Mexico August 23-29, 2010;

*Noting* that governments through the Caribbean have adopted a wide range of policies and programmes to address the challenges faced by the youth population, particularly in the areas of increasing access to education, training and job creation and strengthening of social protection systems.

*Realizing* that many of these initiatives are either linked to or can contribute to the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals;

*Further realizing* that in spite of these efforts, significant gaps 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;

*Taking into consideration* that the key need identified for the region is co-ordination, the recommendations of the Ministers for Social and Sustainable Development are intended to advance the CARICOM and/or regional agenda to synthesize and prioritize the various policy responses on investing in youth.

*Recognizing* the opportunity presented by the forthcoming CARICOM Summit on Youth Development (29-30 January 2010, Paramaribo, Suriname) as well as a Regional meeting of Ministers of Youth scheduled for Rio de Janeiro May 19-21, 2010 to highlight the political will to advance the development and implementation of youth policies;

Recommends to the Summit that in order to advance the agenda for investing in youth, the following policies be adopted for coherent and co-ordinated national and regional action:

1. Each government establish a high level mechanism to provide leadership, co-ordination, mainstreaming and follow-up on the implementation of national youth policies. Ideally, the mechanism could have support or sponsorship at the level of Head of State or Cabinet. Ensuring co-ordination and mainstreaming within government should be a key objective. The mechanism should be bi-partisan so as to encourage broad-based participation and to signal the need for concerted action;
2. Strengthen the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) to have greater focus on issues affecting young people through youth mainstreaming in all its deliberations and to facilitate regional co-ordination on investing in youth.
3. Each government ensure adequate legislation empowering and protecting the rights of youth within the framework of international human rights instruments including the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
4. CARICOM with support from UNESCO/MOST and other relevant partners spearhead evaluation of existing youth policy and programme initiatives with a view to identifying good practices which have proved effective in encouraging youth participation and civic engagement and ensure that governments and civil society have the information necessary for replication. The choice of these initiatives should match the priority needs established by governments for investment..
5. Strengthen national data collection and analysis capabilities and promote collaboration among the statistical departments or agencies of governments in a regional initiative to develop a common approach to collecting regional youth data, including a focus on harmonizing meta data, disaggregated data (e.g. gender), the development of indicators and baseline data for evidence-based policy-making.
6. Inclusion of the pre-adolescence period between 10 and 14 years in developing a regional approach to youth policies

7. Implement a co-ordinated regional approach on:

- a) education responses, - formal and non-formal
- b) linking education and job skill training (including ICTs)
- c) cultural industries, using culture as entry point (music, web)
- d) providing community spaces designed for youth (informal, sports, cultural, education) including web spaces
- e) micro-enterprise development (leveraging private sector partners)
- f) health wellbeing, HIV education, sex education (see UNESCO sex guidelines), phased targeted health care facilities and services sensitive to youth)
- g) promoting youth media (radio, blogging)
- h) mainstreaming youth participation, especially as responsible citizens with the right to give feedback on all social services, education system, justice and police, on their experiences as perceived by youth so services can modify approaches
- i) mandating youth leadership opportunities, ranging from youth parliaments, local councils, peer to peer programmers, to engaging NGOs on developing leadership skills
- j) sport as entry point, with specific sports policies for youth starting with physical education
- k) specific youth employment strategies and link benefits of investing to finance ministry goals
- l) programmes for persons with disabilities
- m) encourage UNCT co-ordination, and use UNDAF as a tool for coherence within the UN family and for assisting with priority actions

8. Revise and strengthen the existing CARICOM regional Strategy on Youth Development, including clearly defined youth development Goals. In this regard, consideration could be given to the adoption of a CARICOM Youth Charter modelled after the 2006 Africa Youth Charter.

9. Development of National Youth Policies where non-existent, including incorporating monitoring and evaluation mechanisms, and the review of existing policy instruments with the full participation of the youth population

10. Undertake, as a matter of urgency, professionalization of youth development for an effective youth empowerment strategy.

11. Further advance work on the Youth Development Index currently being undertaken by the Commonwealth Secretariat to facilitate scientific impact assessment of development strategies and programmes.

12. Promote partnerships with the private sector and other relevant stakeholders.

13. Conduct budget audits of expenditure on youth programmes to ensure adequate allocation of resources, emphasising that social investment is a productive factor and the serious risks associated with not investing in youth.

14. Strengthen and reposition youth ministries and agencies including through undertaking scientific assessment of the capacities of these entities in collaboration with initiatives being spearheaded by the Commonwealth Youth Programme.

15. Use the International Year of Youth and World Conference on Youth to advance youth advocacy and revitalize government commitment to investing in youth development.

*CARICOM Ministers of Social Development*

*24-26 January 2010*

*Kingston, Jamaica*