



CPDC
Caribbean Policy Development Centre

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TIME FOR INCLUSION IN CONFRONTING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The Caribbean (NGO) Policy Development Centre (CPDC) wishes to express our heartfelt sympathy to our Caribbean families, communities and societies that have been impacted by the COVID-19 virus. We thank the region's health care workers, particularly in hospitals and community health facilities, and the many other front-line workers who bravely continue to place life and livelihoods at risk to safeguard the region's public health in these very trying times.

Noting that the threat of infection by the COVID-19 virus has created an environment of fear that permeates our citizenry, we recognise the immense pressures that our Governments are experiencing in managing this global pandemic within our borders. While our Caribbean governments must continue to do all they can in managing this pandemic; there is an extreme burden of care and balance that must not be considered lightly. CPDC is particularly concerned about the extent to which states, via their security forces, have limited the most basic freedoms which, as democratic nations, we hold dear. Notwithstanding the co-operation of citizens throughout the region in complying with these extreme measures, we view these extreme mitigating measures of government-mandated curfews and national lockdowns as solutions applicable only in the short term to tackle COVID-19. In this respect, CPDC calls on our governments to communicate clear criteria by which government-mandated lockdowns will come to an end.

Reports from our NGO members and partners on the ground suggest an increasing incidence of domestic violence. Trinidad and Tobago's Commissioner of Police, Mr Gary Griffith, reported that there had been a [doubling in domestic violence](#) incidents compared with the same period in prior years, which was consistent with a worldwide trend where "stay at home" measures have been implemented.

Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka - UN Women Executive Director, has noted that gender-based violence has become the [“shadow” pandemic](#). This increased incidence of gender-based violence against women and girls in our region is a looming crisis which our governments can ill-afford to ignore. CPDC, therefore, implores our Caribbean governments to recognise grassroots and gender-oriented organisations as essential services to help address such issues and urges the utilisation of gender-responsive budgeting in their development responses.

CPDC notes the views of both the World Bank that posits Caribbean nations will experience [sharp recessions](#) and those of Mr. Guy Ryder, Director of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) who reported that "Workers and businesses are [facing catastrophe](#), in both developed and developing economies" and "We have to move fast, decisively and together; as the right urgent measures could make the difference between survival and collapse."

CPDC calls on Caribbean governments to have a collective CARICOM voice in advocating for debt forgiveness, relief and reparations to ensure that the health crisis caused by COVID-19 does not trigger an even greater socio-economic crisis characterised by challenges of unemployment, food security, small business sustainability, higher levels of crime, greater need for social safety nets for our most vulnerable, psychosocial issues and greater dependence on foreign aid and loans for development.

Mr. Richard Jones, Officer In Charge of CPDC, states that it is time for inclusion to confront the COVID-19 pandemic. Successfully addressing the COVID-19 crisis, requires the efforts of every sector. Mr. Jones further calls on our Caribbean leaders to prioritise inclusion in the decision-making and implementation process across the Caribbean and to harness the collective energies, experience and expertise of the civil society sector throughout our region.

The COVID-19 crisis also presents an opportunity for our region to reset our development priorities and trajectory. CPDC looks forward to working along with and doing our part in a fully inclusive collaborative platform of citizens, NGOs, governments, regional and international development partners to chart a path of recovery and sustainable development post-COVID-19.

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About CPDC

The Caribbean Policy Development Centre is a legally registered non-profit headquartered in Barbados and established in 1991. CPDC serves as a regional umbrella NGO for organisations comprising of small farmers, women, youth, Indigenous People, rural populations and faith-based organisations located across CARICOM. Altogether it serves some thirty-three (33) regional, sub-regional and national (local) NGOs working at the grassroots level in economic, social, and cultural areas in the Caribbean. For over twenty-nine (29) years, the CPDC has also developed a working partnership with NGOs in fourteen (14) CARIFORUM member states, as well as regional and international inter-governmental development partners. For more information, please contact the office via email at cpdc@caribsurf.com, or visit CPDC online at WWW.cpdngo.org