

**REMARKS BY AMBASSADOR SHEILA SEALY MONTEITH TO  
PANEL DISCUSSIONS ON “REGIONAL DIMENSION OF FOLLOW-UP TO THE 2030 AGENDA  
36<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF ECLAC, MEXICO CITY, 25<sup>TH</sup> MAY 2016**

Expressions of gratitude to host country.

Expressions of appreciation to ECLAC Executive Secretary Alicia Barcena for her leadership and vision; a friend of the Caribbean; devolution of responsibility for the Caribbean to the CDCC and appreciation for its role and work at the sub-regional level.

Jamaica’s presence on panel is to bring the perspective of the Caribbean to bear on the discussions and so on behalf of the sub-region, express appreciation for this opportunity.

There is much to be said of what is required for follow-up and implementation of the SDGs at national, regional and international levels. Already many of our countries have been taking steps to align Vision 2030 to their national plans. Our focus today is on the regional dimension of the follow-up, even as we are fully aware that there are no clear lines between and among them.

I am struck by two prescriptions that have been used in the course of this week in connection with our deliberations at this sessions and which encapsulate both the challenges and opportunities which we face in the regional implementation of the Agenda 2030. The first was provided by Mr. Winston Dookeran, a former Foreign Minister of Trinidad and Tobago, at a session with the Caribbean on Monday, when he spoke of “shifting frontiers”, that is, a dramatic departure from what currently obtains; elevating our vision and ambition for the development of the region. The second comes to us from Horizons 2030, at the “environmental big push”, a change in the style of development that is nothing short of transformative. I recall that on several occasions reference has been made to the tectonic developments at the global level that are impacting us and this suggests that our response must also be tectonic.

Over the course of past days and in other forums within the region, we have had cause to explore the gravity of the situation which affect our countries and region, and their causes and consequences. I will not repeat them here.

The SDGs, a singularly significant development, is our opportunity to make the push, to shift those frontiers. How do we contemplate this at the regional level:

1. Awareness and familiarity with Agenda 2030 is not the purview of only diplomats, political leaders and policy makers. It is the responsibility of all our citizenry and they

need to know this. I make reference to a Meeting of civil registrars which is being held in Jamaica this week and in the public dissemination of the information on the event, the official noted that it was being convened in pursuit of Agenda 203. He went on to add that this was specifically in connection with Goal 16, target 9, which led me to look this up to find the reference – By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration. Indeed, the SDGs must infuse all our activities.

Similarly, I was at a meeting recently involving our youth and in their contribution, they made mention that historically, development plans have viewed them as beneficiaries, persons in need of assistance. They are imploring us to see them as ‘implementors’, an integral contributor to the implementation of Agenda 2030. They, with their expertise in the use of social media, have a useful role to play in the dissemination of the SDGs. Our response is to ensure that the technology is available and reliable.

2. Secondly, we need to give teeth to the institutional arrangements which are in place in the region. We can acknowledge what already exists and what works. The MDGs, while not fully implemented as desired, provide some important lessons for us. We note the invaluable achievements of the ECLAC and its subsidiary bodies, especially the CDCC in relation to the sub-region; the regional financial and development institutions; political mechanisms; all with their respective areas of competence, even as we struggle to avoid duplication and in some cases lethargy. All have a place and the need is great!

When we have strengthened our regional processes, it puts us in a better position to contemplate our relations with cross-regional institutions such as the Commonwealth.

This meeting has approved an additional body, the Regional Forum, whose work will now feed into the UN-determined processes.

3. We must acknowledge and take definitive steps to address the special needs of member states to build their resilience. The Caribbean has special needs and interests – this is undeniable and we heard these emphasised by Minister Mark Brantley of St. Kitts and Nevis in his presentation yesterday. It would be foolhardy to ignore this and yet it is possible to use the strength of the regional collaboration, the weight of the region’s resources and power-base to:
  - support the case for the development of a vulnerability index in collaboration with institutions like the Commonwealth;
  - address the particular level of indebtedness of the sub-region and support strategies such as the debt-for-adaptation swap;
  - address the correspondent banking and de-risking issues as well as those related to financial services;
  - the need for improved capacity for trade;
  - the importance of the Green and Blue economies to our region.

We need the support of renewed and continued advocacy by the more powerful among us, harnessing our diplomatic and political skills of which there is much in the region; and the research and analytical skills provided by ECLAC/CDCC.

Of course, the issues surrounding middle income designation are critical and naturally as we address them, we are simultaneously tapping into the concerns of other countries across the region.

It is noted that Agenda 2030 falls within a series of international conference which have contributed to the development agenda, ending with the Paris Agreement and having the Addis Ababa Action Agenda as a precursor. I draw attention to the SAMOA Pathway, which follows from the Barbados Programme of Action and the Mauritius Strategy. It is often overlooked in the rhetoric and in our documentation, but remains relevant because of its direct bearing on the small states of the Caribbean.

4. I was pleased to hear Foreign Minister Susan Malcorra of Argentina making reference in her presentation earlier this morning to the importance of South-South Cooperation. Perhaps we really do underestimate the reality that much of what is possible has to be the outgrowth of the cooperative relations between our countries at the regional level. Many are the examples of the benefits of sharing best practices, building human capacity, civil society collaboration and nurturing small and medium enterprises.

Existing mechanisms such as the UN Committee on South-South Cooperation and that of ECLAC offer pointers based on past experiences.

Caribbean countries can learn from each other, given obvious similarities, but if we want to shift frontiers, to harness technology, to innovate and expand our horizons, we need the confidence of support from our larger brothers and sisters in the region.

5. We will also need to address big ticket issues within our region such as transportation, energy and education to promote innovation.
6. Finally, I believe that in making the case for the SDGS, it would be useful to court, develop and make use of champions within the region, to sensitise other and to support its implementation. Madame Barcena, I consider you a champion of the cause, but we need others, be they individuals, institutions, NGOs or private sector.

In conclusion, Agenda 2030 is intended for the benefit of all, including our young people. We have a chance to make a difference, not for the future, but now.

Ladies and gentlemen, I thank you.