



## **Premier says Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) on target to meet the MDG of Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women**

Honourable Dr. Michael Misick, Premier of Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI), says his country is on the right track to fulfilling the Millennium Development Goal of empowering women and attaining gender equality. The Premier made the comment as he addressed participants at a regional workshop on Gender- Sensitive National Planning and Budgeting, put on by UNFPA and the government of the Turks and Caicos Islands, at Beaches Turks and Caicos Resort in Providenciales, TCI, on Monday December 4, 2006.

The Premier said his government was preparing the country for the next generation by focusing on empowerment, education and providing equal opportunities for all. He stressed that in the TCI, as in other Caribbean countries, women were leading the way in education, with more of them going to universities and as a consequence taking up positions of responsibility including in government.

The Premier headed the long list of government officials, experts from academia, regional and international organizations, as well as representatives from national Bureaux of Women's Affairs and national planning and budgeting agencies in attendance at the two-day workshop. The purpose of the workshop was to increase awareness among key stakeholders about the links between gender equality and the achievement of development goals; and to propose strategies for sustainable integration of gender equality into national planning and budgeting processes.

Dr. Lillian Boyce, Minister of Education, Sports, Culture, Social Development and Gender Affairs who was the Key note speaker at the Opening Ceremony, reiterated the critical link between education and empowerment; and the achievement of poverty reduction. In this regard, she stated that the TCI government was providing over 15 million dollars in scholarships to allow citizens to study overseas and had embarked on a revolutionary social programme, designed to ensure that all citizens, male and female alike, enjoyed the benefits of the current economic growth being experienced on the islands.

She proposed that within the context of the Caribbean, a regional approach to poverty reduction was most appropriate and called for greater focus on capacity building and sensitization to the role of gender in development as a means of ensuring that adequate resources were provided to honour the commitments made towards achieving the goal of gender equality and poverty reduction.

The two day Regional Workshop on Gender-Sensitive National Planning and Budgeting saw forty-four representatives from gender bureaux and national planning and budgeting agencies from across the Caribbean, meeting in Providenciales from December 5-6, 2006 to share ideas and hammer out a plan for the mainstreaming of gender perspectives into national policies and programmes.

The workshop, organized by UNFPA, the United Nations Population Fund in association with the government of the Turks and Caicos Islands, targeted specifically Overseas Territories, those countries within the Caribbean that remain under colonial reign. The meeting was a follow-up to one held in Antigua last year and was in direct response to concerns raised by participants from Overseas Territories for capacity building in order to strengthen their national gender machineries and to increase awareness of the importance of gender mainstreaming in the development process.

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