

**COHSOD
COMMITTED TO
BUILDING A
REGION FIT FOR
CHILDREN**

(CARICOM Secretariat, Turkeyen, Greater Georgetown, Guyana)

The Twelfth Special Meeting of the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) ended its three-day session in Georgetown, Guyana on 19 March 2008 with a twenty-point Declaration entitled Building a Region Fit for Children.

The Georgetown Declaration seeks to ensure the right of every Caribbean child to survival, development, protection, dignity and participation within the Caribbean Community. It also seeks to commit Member States to actionable tenets which speak to improvement in the quality of and access to Early Childhood care and protection; legislative reforms and protective systems for children and adolescents.

The Declaration speaks to improvements in the data gathering and monitoring mechanisms of the Community to inform regional policies and interventions and emphasizes the promotion of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to engage children in understanding and contributing to their communities. Another major strand is the commitment to the development of public education campaigns on Climate Change and actions to mitigate its effects on children.

The text of the Declaration follows:

The Georgetown Declaration on *Building a Region Fit for Children* For the survival, development, protection dignity, and participation of Children within the Caribbean Community

We the Ministers of the Caribbean Community with responsibility for Children together with representatives of regional and international development organizations and regional educational institutions participating in the Twelfth Special Meeting of the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) on Children at the Guyana International Conference Centre, Turkeyen, 17th – 19th March, 2008;

Aiming to ensure the right to survival, development, protection, dignity and participation of Children within the Caribbean Community;

Affirming the commitment of the Caribbean Community to the realization of the rights of all Children as enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child which defines a Child as every human being below the age of eighteen;

Reaffirming our commitment to investing in Children as both a national and a regional development priority;

Noting with grave concern the adverse effects on Children of natural disasters, climate change, violence, HIV and AIDS, child abuse and exploitation, family separation and migration, malnutrition, including obesity and other lifestyle related diseases;

Recognising that optimizing the development of Children from early

childhood to adolescence, through health care, early stimulation, development monitoring, parenting and community support, quality education, and safe and protective environments is fundamental to determining the well being and life chances of our Children.

Emphasising the importance of the family, spiritual and intellectual development, cultural identity and diversity, physical activity and psychosocial well-being to the holistic development of our Children

Commit to the following actions aimed at improving the well being of Children in the Caribbean Community through:

- The establishment of mechanisms to improve the quality of, and increase access to inclusive early childhood care, education and development services and in particular, for vulnerable and marginalized Children
- The strengthening of protective environments in homes, schools and communities
- The reforming of legislation and protection systems for Children
- The extension of social protection and welfare programmes to ensure equity of opportunity and to enhance life chances to guarantee holistic development
- The improvement of research, disaggregated data collection and monitoring systems to inform policy and interventions
- The implementation of Health and Family Life Education for Children in and out of school
- The development and delivery of parenting education programmes to build capacity to deliver quality care
- The completion and adoption of the Caribbean Cooperation in Health III with a particular focus on continued reduction of child and infant mortality nutrition-related non-communicable diseases and increased physical activity in and out of school
- The consideration of children and their particular needs in the revision of the Caribbean Regional Strategic Framework for HIV and AIDS (CRSF)
- The retention of Children and in education, enabling both boys and girls to complete their schooling to the best of their ability
- The active engagement of Children in understanding and contributing to the development of their communities, including through the use of various media and Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs)
- Actions geared to reducing the digital divide in order to promote equitable development of our Children
- Strengthening the Children's programme and Children's participation in CARIFESTA
- Development and implementation of national policies that take Children into consideration and that adequate resources are made available for its implementation

Also commit to:

- Raising awareness of the importance of acting now to address the causes and consequences of climate change;
- Advocating to effect the policy, technical, attitudinal and behavioural changes needed to ensure the survival and development of the next generation in a world affected by climate change;

- Strategic planning in disaster preparedness and management for and with Children
- Educating our Children of all age groups on the dangers of substance use and abuse
- Strategic planning and advocacy for addressing violence against children
- Monitoring progress of implementation at the national level through National COHSODs and reporting to COHSOD on an annual basis.

Agree to the commitments set out herein, recognizing that political will at the highest level is critical to success

**Georgetown, Guyana,
19th March 2008**