



**ILO Sub-regional Meeting on
Strengthening Women-Owned Enterprises
Through increased access to International and Regional Markets
Kingston, Jamaica: 23-25 July 2003**

THE KINGSTON DECLARATION

Preamble

Thirty (30) representatives of women-owned enterprises and their organizations, stakeholders and policy makers participated in a sub-regional meeting aimed at strengthening women-owned enterprises through increased access to international and regional markets. Participants were drawn from nine (9) Caribbean countries, namely, Barbados, Grenada, Guyana, Jamaica, St. Kitts-Nevis, Saint Lucia, St. Vincent & The Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad & Tobago. The meeting was held at the Jamaica Pegasus Hotel, Kingston, Jamaica, 23-25 July 2003.

The meeting addressed issues aimed at preparing Caribbean women-owned enterprises for regional and global competitiveness on a sustainable basis. A web site, CAWE-CAWEB, funded by the ILO for promoting the business and products of Caribbean women-owned enterprises, was launched during the meeting. The sub-regional meeting was organised by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Programme for the Promotion of Management-Labour Cooperation (PROMALCO) in collaboration with the Caribbean Association of Women Entrepreneurs (CAWE) and the Jamaica Business Development Centre (JBDC).

Conclusions

The meeting arrived at the following main conclusions:

1. Women contribute significantly to the economic and social development of Caribbean countries through enterprise and employment creation.
2. An enabling environment would facilitate the ability of women-owned enterprises to further enhance this significant contribution, bearing in mind that no economy can attract foreign investors if it cannot attract and nurture local investors.
3. The main drivers of this enabling environment should include a legal and regulatory framework that is appropriate and non-discriminatory to women-owned enterprises.
4. Regional institutions, such as CARICOM and others, as well as regional NGOs have a responsibility to promote the integration of national and regional markets so as to enhance access to global markets.
5. An urgent need exists for representative women organizations at both national and regional levels to advocate, promote and sustain the economic and social interests of women.

6. Women-owned enterprises are a viable and integral component of the business community. Therefore, they must be recognized as such.
7. Women-owned enterprises must strive to operate competitively at national, regional and international markets. This calls for improvement in the provision of support and skills in the fields of strategic management, marketing and human resource development.

Recommendations

In the light of the foregoing conclusions, the meeting recommended the following:

1. Women entrepreneurs should create a balance between home life and business life and sensitize their family members so that they can provide them with the appropriate support mechanisms for success.
2. Women entrepreneurs and their associations should strive for effective representation and linkages with relevant public and private sector support agencies at national, regional and international levels.
3. Women-owned enterprises, with the assistance and support of their associations, should build up their technical and managerial expertise to enhance their international competitiveness
4. Practical measures should be instituted to promote innovation and sharing of information on access to regional and international markets, such as through the development of the CAWE-CAWEB web site.
5. Relevant public authorities should ensure that
 - (a) gender is used in data gathering, analysis and dissemination
 - (b) such data should include the scope and scale of women-owned enterprises, as well as on the barriers and constraints facing them.
6. Relevant public authorities should provide technical support to women-owned enterprises in areas such as standards, productivity improvement, business planning, capacity building, export development, merchandising and marketing, as well as facilitating the ease of movement of people and products
7. Financial institutions and other lending agencies should restructure their policies and practices to ensure equitable treatment and access to a very significant segment of their markets
8. Media and other relevant institutions should ensure that achievements and challenges of women-owned enterprises and their organizations are promoted and highlighted
9. National and regional institutions should ensure that women-owned enterprises and their organizations are represented at policy and policy-making levels.
10. International agencies such as the ILO and UNIFEM should carry out further research on the problems and opportunities facing women entrepreneurs and highlight good practices so as to identify and support key actions.

Kingston, Jamaica

Friday, 25 July 2003