



MINISTRY OF YOUTH, FAMILY AND SPORTS

# Welcome Address

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Ninth Commonwealth Women's Ministers Meeting

Delivered by

The Hon. Stephen Lashley, M.P.  
Minister of Youth, Family and Sports

**June 7, 2010**

6:00 PM

Flamboyant Room

Lloyd Erskine Sandiford Centre

Thank you, Madame Chairman. Prime Minister (Ag.) Honourable Freundel Stuart, Q.C; Your Excellency, Kamallesh Sharma, Commonwealth Secretary General; Your Excellency, Dame Stephanie Shirley; Commonwealth Ministers; members of the Cabinet of Barbados; other parliamentarians; members of the Diplomatic Corp; Delegates; members of the local and international media; distinguished ladies and gentlemen.

It is my esteemed pleasure to welcome you to this Opening Ceremony of the Ninth Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting. On behalf of the Government and people of Barbados, a special welcome is extended to delegates from overseas territories to our island. It is our sincere hope that your stay here will not only be filled with intensive and fruitful deliberations over the next two days but that you have also allocated yourself some time to enjoy what Barbados has to offer.

We are all brothers and sisters in history and on this occasion we will focus on the challenges facing our sister citizens of our respective societies as a result of the current global economic experience. It is therefore pertinent that in addressing the theme, 'Gender Issues in Economic Crisis, Recovery and Beyond: Women as Agents of Transformation,' we put out collective wisdom together to develop

strategies in response to the challenges that our women face. If there is one thing that I am sure we can all agree on right now, is that we would want that this recession ends within the shortest possible time to ensure that the lives of all our citizens assume a state of normalcy and that it is conducive to peace, happiness and prosperity to all.

But we have new economic challenges on the horizon as the economies of Europe wield under serious financial pressures that are sure to affect us. We need in our deliberations to focus on these new challenges as well.

The time has come for us who have been involved in the planning of this event to bear the first fruits of all the extensive and intensive work that has gone on behind the scenes over the past several months. I hope you all agree with me that so far the experience has brought about the desired outcomes and that the additional activities will prove to be equally rewarding to the planners and delegates of this meeting.

This is the second major international activity for my Ministry in two months, the first being the ICC T/20 Championships and although the West Indies team did not do as well as we would have liked, it is my desire that at the end of this event, the

focus of our concentrations, that is - the women of the Commonwealth, will be assured that by the decisions we make, their quality of life will be enhanced in the not too distant future.

There is great diversity in the fortunes of women in our states and this meeting provides an ample opportunity for us as their representatives to learn from each other on how to respond to the challenges our women face. The Government of Barbados has adopted a collaborative and participatory approach to address the developmental issues of women and if I can offer one small piece of advice at this stage, it is that we should not underestimate the capacity of the persons we represent but involve them in all the deliberations, in the decision making and the implementation. We should also underscore the value of their representatives and I commend the Commonwealth Secretariat for their engagement of civil society in activities such as this as it is recognised that through this approach, the outcomes will be more responsive to the needs that are being addressed.

The programme over the next two days from my observation is very intense and in recognition of that both the Government of Barbados and the Commonwealth Secretariat have interspersed some social events to reinvigorate you and to make this meeting mutually pleasing from both the technical and casual perspectives.

I encourage you to take time out to view the exhibits on display and to enjoy our world-renowned fine cuisine and cultural offerings. This is but a small taste of Barbados and I am sure that our Minister of Tourism and all Barbadians would want to join me in extending an invitation to our overseas guests to return to our shores to share the Barbados experience over a longer period and to bring your families and friends.

Once again, it is my pleasure to welcome you to Barbados and to the Ninth Commonwealth Women's Affairs Ministers Meeting.

I thank you.