



**Statement by H.E. Kitty Sweeb, Permanent Representative of the Republic of Suriname,
on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), at the 2020 Economic and Social Council
Operational Activities for Development Segment, Session 4 (a): Responding to needs and priorities of
countries serviced by multi-country offices, 22 May 2020**

I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the fourteen (14) Member States of CARICOM, and I wish to align these remarks with those delivered by the representative of Guyana, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and with those by Ambassador Young, Permanent Representative of Belize and Chair of the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS).

At the outset, the Group expresses its appreciation to the President and Vice-President of ECOSOC for convening this very important session on the multi-country offices; to the Special Advisor to the UNSG on climate action and ASG to the climate action team, for moderating this session; and to the panelists for their insightful presentations.

Mr. Moderator,

CARICOM finds it useful to reflect on where we were in 2019 and where we are today. At last year's Operational Activities Segment, CARICOM raised a number of concerns on the manner with which the Review was carried out in the Caribbean Region and sought clarifications on a number of recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's Report then.

In light of this, CARICOM actively engaged with OHRLLS, DCO and the Inter-Agency Working Group over months of frank dialogue and consultations. During these consultations, we managed to deepen our understanding of the recommendations, lay out our clear expectations of the MCO architecture in the Region, and expand on the offer of tailored support for programme countries. CARICOM is pleased to see many of these elements highlighted in this year's Secretary-General's Report. This illustrates that dialogue and frank discussions among all stakeholders, in a manner that is transparent and collaborative, can achieve results.

While some issues remain outstanding, CARICOM is of the view that it is time to move forward with these proposals for the inclusion of the Secretary-General's Report to the Operational Activities Segment this year, so that the next intergovernmental process on these proposals can proceed.

Notwithstanding, CARICOM would like to take the opportunity to reiterate the following points:

First, the recommendations contained in the Secretary-General's Report do not include the specific details that were outlined in the documents presented by the Deputy-Secretary General on January 27th and March 27th of 2020. The Group believes that it is necessary to keep these documents in view as a

reference point as it contains key elements which were instrumental in CARICOM's decision to endorse the proposals.

Secondly, CARICOM agrees with the Secretary-General's recommendation that the MCOs require additional and predictable financial and personnel resources for coordination and policy support on the ground. In this regard, the Group welcomes the proposal to strengthen in-country presence through the development coordination officers, and to improve the coordination capacity of the Barbados Office.

CARICOM also supports the proposal for the allocation of additional resources to the MCOs in the region, through the increased financial resources on the basis of countries and territories covered in each MCO. In addition, we also stress the role of MCOs in mobilizing or improving access to predictable programmatic resources needed to help drive the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the SAMOA Pathway, as well as to support national development plans.

CARICOM also reiterates the importance of ensuring that staffing profiles in the MCOs are appropriately tailored to address the realities of the countries in which they serve. As a key part of the repositioning process, CARICOM continues to call for the system to ensure that staffing profiles include the relevant skills sets, experience and knowledge to the unique challenges facing SIDS and the Caribbean region, especially in the face of this pandemic.

CARICOM notes that the cost of strengthening MCO coordination will be drawn from the Special Purpose Trust Fund (SPTF) and budget neutral as costs will be offset by the savings made in transitioning most UN Information Centres (UNIC) into the RCO staffing structure. Therefore, CARICOM reiterates the importance of ensuring that the implementation of these proposals do not adversely impact the resources available to the Caribbean Information Centre in Port of Spain nor eliminate the communication tools that have been most effective in the region.

In closing, CARICOM recognizes the significant strides made through the further consultations on the Secretary-General's initial recommendations for the future MCO offer in the region. These proposals are promising, but without its full implementation, gaps will continue to exist and undermine our collective efforts to achieve sustainable development. As such, there must be continued consultations and follow-up during the implementation phase in order to ensure regular reviews to assess progress, challenges and impact of the proposals across the regions.

Rest assured, CARICOM remains committed to the repositioning process of the development system, and you can continue to count on the region's constructive and collaborative engagement going forward on this important issue.

I thank you.