



*As prepared for delivery*

## **YOUTH FOR INNOVATION AND RESILIENCE (FIRE) FORUM**

### **CLOSING REMARKS**

**BY**

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**JUNE 7, 2022**

Salutations:

I wish to start by congratulating all who supported as planners and speakers, with special recognition of the young leaders and advocates who conceptualised this forum and worked with the CDB team to deliver this Youth FIRE Forum:

- Amy Francis - Nanichi Foundation
- Ashley Lashley - The HEY Campaign
- Dawsher Charles - Survival Scholars
- Dominique Noralez - Ambassador 2022 with UWI STAT, Cave Hill Corps,
- Kurba-Marie Questelles - One Young World - Caribbean Coordinating Ambassador
- Arielle Neeley from our host country, TCI.

And of course, our MCs Renee Atwell and Kendall Vincent. This year's Forum was compelling - which is a testament to young people's extraordinary capacity to lead as well as to identify and deliver solutions to critical issues facing the Region.

Today we witnessed young people from across the Caribbean, of different ages, genders, backgrounds, interest groups and specialisations, as well as other development partners, coming together to present and co-create concrete ideas and solutions. Admittedly, the discussions, introduced by outstanding youth leaders – Renee and Kendell –and skillfully moderated by Keron and Tracy-Ann, highlighted some examples of progress. However, what struck me most, is that every single speaker expressed that much more can be done and much more needs to be done – with urgency and now!

Quacy, Jamilla, Colin, Onika, Anya - you reminded us that climate change is the single biggest health threat facing our Caribbean societies. And while no one is safe from these risks, the people whose health is being harmed first and worst, are the people who contribute least to its causes, and who are least able to protect themselves and their families against it – the most vulnerable. We at CDB listened to your experiences and your recommendations. We were equally attentive to and very excited by the vast potential we have in the Region for youth-led actions to improve resilience in climate change and health across the Bank's 19 Borrowing Member Countries.

It was also my privilege to hear about the work that Keithlin, Nicholas and Malcolm are leading, and their recommendations on the skills and competencies needed for youth to gain decent work opportunities. We also heard from members of and advocates for indigenous people, persons with disabilities, youth in urban communities and those from migrant populations – in Amy, Katrina, Obrina and Ariella, respectively. Key takeaways from your excellent presentations are; the need to ensure that education offers a solid foundation for employability skills; that youth should continuously audit their skills, improve existing skills and acquire new ones as per ever-evolving market demand; that the barriers to active inclusion of the most vulnerable individuals are multiple and complex; and as such, there needs to be coordinated and integrated mechanisms and capacities at the national and regional levels; and enhanced cross-sector services to ensure inclusion of vulnerable groups.

The energy, creativity and innovativeness of our youth are not lost on the Bank's Executive Management. I, therefore, wish to conclude my tributes by commending Dr Gene Leon, President, Caribbean Development Bank, Ms. Yvette Lemonias-Seale, Vice President, Corporate Services and Mr. Isaac Solomon, Vice President, Operations for their continued support to the region's youth and for ensuring that the Youth Forum was given prominence on the agenda of the Board of Governor's Meeting again this year.

We are acutely aware that there can be no sustainable development unless our young people are at the centre of efforts – as equal and trusted development partners. As such, I am pleased to announce that CDB will shortly launch its Future Leaders Network or (CFLN). The CFLN will be the Bank's formal mechanism for consulting with young people. Benefits to young people include an opportunity for knowledge sharing; capacity building; opportunities to draw on the Bank's convening power; and coaching and mentorship.

The Call for Expressions of Interest to join the CFLN is now open to young people from the Bank's 19 Borrowing Member Countries. We will be posting this on our social media platforms on the dot of 12 p.m. today. CDB, through its CFLN, is creating a seat at our

table. We do hope that young people from across the Region will join us to lead, innovate and co-create!