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Address

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CIIF Creative Talk: Women in Creative Industries-
Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change

March 7, 2019
CDB Conference Centre, St. Michael, Barbados

It is my great privilege to welcome such an esteemed group of professionals to CDB today including Development Partners, Academia, Gender Equality Specialists and Creative Industry Practitioners, as well as those participating online from our Borrowing Member Countries.

A heart-warming Good morning to everyone. It is indeed a pleasure to be here with you in celebration of International Women's Day.

On this day, we recognise everyone who has contributed to advancing the status and position of ALL women. We acknowledge the strength and determination of ordinary women who continue to overcome the various obstacles they encounter in their lives.

This year, the theme for International women's Day 2019 is "**Think equal, build smart, innovate for change**". The focus is the role that innovation can play in advancing gender equality (GE) and the empowerment of women and girls.

That is, how can we harness and scale up the creative talents of industry leaders, game-changing start-ups, social entrepreneurs, female activists, and women innovators to remove the remaining barriers to achieving equality between and among women and men. And how we can encourage investment in responsive and inclusive social systems that deliver the build services and infrastructure necessary to meet the needs of women and girls.

We at CDB accept that innovation and technology must be at the center of borrowing member countries' efforts to transform their economies for inclusive and sustainable economic growth and development¹. We also acknowledge that closing the gaps in the participation rates of women and men in the education system, particularly in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines, will be yardstick of the transformation taking place in these societies. The gap is wide particularly at the upper secondary, post-secondary and tertiary levels. This is compounded by trends indicating a growing digital divide with women under-represented in STEM.

With advances in technology (for example, mobile capability, home entertainment products imbued with artificial intelligence, and app-based delivery services) being driven by discoveries in STEM sectors, our women and girls are, therefore also missing out on entrepreneurial opportunities arising from Indigenous research and development.

¹ Gartner Inc. (a global research firm)

It is important that women's ideas and experiences are embedded into the innovations that are shaping the future of Caribbean societies. It is with this in mind that CDB has organised today's forum entitled, "**Women in the Creative Industries: Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change**" utilising our newest platform, the "CIIF Creative Talk".

In 2017, CDB established the Cultural and Creative Industries Innovation Fund (CIIF), with an initial USD2.6 million. CIIF is intended to be a multi-donor Fund that supports the development of the creative industries (CI) sector in the Caribbean. CIIF's goal is to enable the Region's cultural and creative industries to be globally competitive.

CIIF Creative Talk aims to create effective communication channels while building trust between funding agencies, government agencies, creative practitioners and administrators in order to establish an effective foundation for coordination. Today's **CIIF Creative Talk** is providing a platform for women in the creative industries to share their experiences in both crafting their projects and building the sector.

The objective of this event is threefold:

- i) to stimulate a better understanding of the challenges that women practitioners in the Creative Industries sector face in Barbados and, indeed, in the wider region;
- ii) to initiate a dialogue about the role and responsibility of actors in the CI sector in influencing society's views of males and females.
- iii) to draw attention to the role that innovation in the creative industries sector may play in generating opportunities for women and girls to transform their lives while influencing others.

Colleagues, many of the development agencies that operate within the Caribbean share similar aspirations for empowering women and girls in the Caribbean. For this reason, we have welcomed opportunities to collaborate with them as partners as we seek to influence cultural practices and challenge socially constructed gender-based norms in our society.

One of those partners, the UN Women Multi-Country Office for the Caribbean is joining us today to launch their project entitled: WE-SPEAK. This is an important project that is offering some big benefits to our women and you will hear much more about it later this morning. CDB is pleased that UN Women has chosen to share this moment with us.

In closing, let me say that CDB is proud of the significant progress it has made in increasing the number of women that hold leadership positions in our organization. At the same time, we are very conscious of the gaps that still exist here and elsewhere and the efforts we need to sustain in breaking down the barriers to women's empowerment. There is still so much more to be done to enable women to work equally in all productive sectors-including the Creative Industries, and at all levels of the productive chain. This is critical for achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and ensuring that no one is left behind.

So as we celebrate the achievements tomorrow on International Women's Day, let us maintain our resolve to continue to support our women and girls in their various fields of endeavour.

Thank You