

**AS PREPARED FOR DELIVERY**



**OPENING REMARKS**

**BY**

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**PRESIDENT, CARIBBEAN DEVELOPMENT BANK**

**AT**

**THE 38TH ANNUAL MEETING OF CONTRIBUTORS**

**TO THE**

**SPECIAL DEVELOPMENT FUND**

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Madame Chair, Contributors to the Special Development Fund, Management and Staff of the Caribbean Development Bank, Good Morning.

Let me join you, Madame Chair, in welcoming everyone to the Thirty-Eighth Annual Meeting of the Special Development Fund.

Contributors, I am pleased to report that, over the past four years, the SDF has risen to the challenge and proved, once again, its invaluable role in supporting our Region's needs in the most difficult of times.

During the SDF 9 cycle, we witnessed two events, unparalleled in our Region's history. The first was the 2017 Atlantic Hurricane Season with its 17 named systems. Incredibly, Hurricanes Irma and Maria passed through our Region within two weeks of each other and caused damage more than 200% of GDP in Dominica and the Virgin Islands. Then in 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic plunged our Region and the rest of the world into deep recession.

In response to the natural hazards, the Bank utilised SDF loan and grant resources to provide emergency relief supplies, deliver humanitarian assistance and clear road access routes, while longer term support focused on restoring infrastructure in the road, education, water supply, agriculture sectors.

With respect to the COVID response, the Bank has provided support to assist countries in procuring PPEs, strengthening the provision of education services and of course, mitigating the fiscal impact of the pandemic.

Over the SDF 9 cycle, therefore, approvals reached \$348 million and disbursements totalled \$278 million. In comparison, SDF 8 approvals and disbursements amounted to \$324.6 million and \$293 million, respectively.

Nevertheless, this overall performance of SDF 9 cannot mask the implementation gaps that led to slow resource utilisation, particularly in the first three years of the cycle. Our Region must tackle the issue of implementation capacity with some urgency.

At CDB, we have been engaged in looking at ways to better support all BMCs during project execution. Our most recent initiative has been the recruitment of resident implementation officers to provide support in two BMCs. Internally, we are also in the process of introducing new systems which will allow us to identify implementation bottlenecks faster and take corrective action earlier.

Our BMCs must likewise be willing to critically assess and be prepared to make modifications to those legislative, regulatory and other requirements that are constraining the timely utilisation of resources. At the Bank, we remain committed to partnering with every BMCs to craft workable and sustainable solutions during the SDF 10 cycle.

SDF 10's main thrust will be to build social, institutional, economic and environmental resilience, paying special attention to gender equality, digitalisation, regional cooperation and integration, and governance.

By focusing the programme on resilience-building, we are also signaling our renewed vision for regional development, built on three principles:

- ***“reimagining”***, which embraces unbounded imagination in a growth mindset for unlocking the potential of the Region;
- ***“rebalancing”*** to ensure that we are taking a holistic approach to development; and
- ***“repositioning”*** to foster the emergence of climate-resilient, gender-balanced, governance-focused, and

dynamic economies.

The SDF has been a flagship of regional development and poverty reduction. It underpins our focus on inclusive development by ensuring that the needs of the most vulnerable groups and countries are addressed and that “no one is left behind”. Going forward, we intend to leverage the resources of the SDF to provide innovative project and policy solutions that add value to the Region; to advance the Bank’s poverty reduction mandate; and to transform the lives of Caribbean people.

Thank you.