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Statement

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International Women's Day 2019

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International Women's Day (IWD) celebrates all women. On this day we recognise the achievements of those who have contributed to advancing the status and position of women locally, regionally and worldwide; and recognise the strength and determination of ordinary women who continue to overcome the daily obstacles in their lives. This year's theme, "**Think equal, build smart, innovate for change**" focuses on innovative ways to advancing gender equality (GE) and the empowerment of women.

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 development. We acknowledge the role that social media plays in enabling Caribbean people to instantly engage with popular culture, and we are committed to engaging with women and girls to innovate through the use of these new technologies.

We also acknowledge that closing the gaps in the participation rates of females and males in the education system, particularly in the Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) disciplines, will be the yardstick of the transformation taking place in our societies. The gap is wide, particularly at the upper secondary, post-secondary and tertiary levels. This is compounded by trends indicating a growing gender 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 STEM capability, our women and girls are missing out on entrepreneurial opportunities arising from indigenous research and development.

IWD 2019 will look to industry leaders, game-changing start-ups, social entrepreneurs, gender equality activists, and women innovators to examine the ways in which their talents can be scaled up to remove barriers and accelerate progress for gender equality; encourage investment in gender-responsive social systems; and build services and infrastructure that meet the needs of women and girls.

It is important that women's ideas and experiences are at the forefront of the innovations that are shaping the future of Caribbean societies. Utilising our newest platform, the Cultural and Creative Industries Innovation Fund (CIIF) "Creative Talk" series, yesterday CDB hosted an interactive forum titled, **Women in the Creative Industries: Think Equal, Build Smart, Innovate for Change** to discuss, reflect and envision a future in which innovation and technology create opportunities for women to transform their lives. The arts offer a powerful platform for self-expression. Through the CIIF Talks, and other similar initiatives, CDB will encourage female artists to embrace leadership roles and to encourage others to follow their dreams.

Our celebration and commitment to equality does not start and end with International Women's Day. We intend to continue exploring innovative approaches and partnerships that proactively target the removal of structural barriers to women's advancement. High on our agenda is the identification of new and creative solutions to empowering women and girls across our region and beyond.

Happy International Women's Day!