

Statement for the Adoption of the Report of St Kitts and Nevis
31st Session of the HRC – 2nd UPR Cycle
Palais des Nations, Geneva
Thursday, 17 March 2016

Thank you, Mr President

Members of the Human Rights Council

Members of Non Government and Civil Society Organisations

Observer Delegations

Ladies and Gentlemen

1. St Kitts and Nevis is pleased to join the host of countries that preceded it for the consideration and adoption of their country's report by the Human Rights Council - the final segment of the Universal Periodic Review.
2. At this the thirty-first session of the HRC, St Kitts and Nevis feels privileged to participate in this mechanism which encourages increased focus on human rights nationally, greater accountability of , and within government, and a more consolidated approach to the provision and monitoring of human rights as prescribed by international legal instruments.

3. St Kitts and Nevis' presentation today constitutes its formal response to the recommendations offered during the interactive dialogue of our 2nd UPR Cycle at the 23rd Session of the Working Group.
4. From a total of 133 recommendations, St Kitts and Nevis accepted 58 which pertain to programmes and initiatives already being implemented and those which could be feasibly implemented over a relatively reasonable period of time, and well in advance of the third cycle. Seventy five (75) recommendations were noted due to the fact that they will require greater commitment of resources, prolonged assessment of the implications on the overall national agenda, and consultation with multi-stakeholders before the next cycle.
5. Due to fiscal and human resource constraints, Mr President, it is important to emphasize that although St Kitts and Nevis is not always able to comply with internationally accepted practices, it remains willing.
6. In essence, Mr President, we have therefore, accepted the recommendations which we deem attainable so that our achievements of the second UPR cycle would have surpassed those of the first.

7. From here on, Mr President, allow the St Kitts and Nevis delegation to provide, in support of its national report and addendum, further evidence of efforts- through initiatives and programmes - to increase the promotion and protection of the rights of its citizens, especially the most vulnerable: children, women, the disabled and the elderly.
8. In the interest of time, the St Kitts and Nevis delegation will address thematically a few recommendations as some issues were dealt with fully either in the country report or the addendum.

Scope of international obligations

9. Mr President, it was, and remains, quite apparent that of the recommendations proposed during the 23rd Session of the Working Group, the majority pertained to the **scope of our international obligations**. In fact, 43 of the 133 of the recommendations, (representing 32%) called for the ratification of human rights core instruments and respective protocols.
10. This percentage highlights not only the importance of these instruments to the international community, but also the significance of that single act of ratification.
11. St Kitts and Nevis is also cognizant of the relevance of the instruments and ratifying same. The stark reality is

however, that St Kitts and Nevis on its own is unable to comply and is in need of international technical assistance.

12. I hasten to add, though, Mr President that a submission for approval regarding St Kitts and Nevis' ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is currently with the Cabinet and we hope that within the second quarter of this year, that will be concluded.

Implementation of International Human Rights Obligations, Cooperation With Human Rights Mechanisms, Creation of an institutional and human rights infrastructure.

13. Additional recommendations offered to St Kitts and Nevis concerned the **implementation of international human rights obligations, cooperation with human rights mechanisms including treaty bodies as well as the creation of an institutional and human rights infrastructure.**
14. The Federation has recognized that a proper structure must be created to follow up, monitor and implement recommendations. So important is this need that St Kitts and Nevis had two senior representatives to participate in a Training of Trainers Workshop regarding treaty body reporting. This training was conducted regionally, and was jointly sponsored by the Office of the High Commissioner

for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

15. Following on from that workshop, the Government, in collaboration with the aforementioned Organisations will conduct two sensitization workshops (one on each island) to engage public, private and civil society throughout the Federation.
16. It is envisaged that subsequently, a multi-sector core group will be formulated that will be responsible specifically for following up on the recommendations, monitoring implementation, and also research, consult and as appropriate, recommend ratification of core human rights instruments. This group would also be responsible for heightening awareness not only about the UPR process but also regarding reporting to treaty bodies. The sensitization seminar and formulation of the group will take place within the next two months.
17. At the aforementioned training session, the Bahamas shared its experience with establishing a similar body. The Bahamian experience offered some best practices which will be modelled when formulating the core body in St. Kitts and Nevis.
18. The delegation affords itself this opportunity to encourage

Member states and other Non-state bodies to partner with us in our efforts to realise full implementation of the recommendations emanating from its 2nd cycle review.

Cooperation with special procedures

19. In principle, St Kitts and Nevis does not object to issuing open and standing invitations to special procedures of the HRC. However, St Kitts and Nevis believes that after the core group is institutionalised, the special procedures could be invited to evaluate and assess its program of work and assist that body with further improvement in its mandate and work.

Equality and non-discrimination

20. Several of the recommendations regarding equality referred specifically to gender equality. St Kitts and Nevis continues to make significant strides in ensuring that both men and women are afforded equal rights in the areas of work, education, and access to health and social services, for example. However, the legal framework should continue to be strengthened, and more initiatives be implemented, especially in the area of equal pay for equal work.
21. The delegation draws the Council's attention to the paragraphs relating to this issue in the Addendum,

submitted a little less than one month ago. Contained therein is a reference to the Domestic and Sexual Violence Complaints and Response Protocol. This month, following approval by the Cabinet, the Department of Gender Affairs conducted a one-day Stakeholder Workshop on the Protocol.

22. According to the last (2011) census of St Kitts and Nevis, females account for 51% of the total population of 47,196. Forty three (43%) of the total number of households (15,680) are headed by females.
23. Further, provisional 2015 employment data illustrate that of a total labour force of 25,866 workers, a total of 13,530 are females –representing 52 percent of the workforce.
24. It is no marvel therefore, Mr President, that in his address to mark International Women’s Day celebrated on March 8th, under the theme, “Pledge for Parity”, the Prime Minister stated, “Empowering women and achieving gender equality are front-burner issues for St. Kitts and Nevis”.
25. And in his conclusion, the Head of Government of St Kitts and Nevis reiterated his Administration’s commitment “to continue to foster a dynamic environment that will accelerate the economic, educational, social and political advancement of women in St. Kitts and Nevis”. He further

stated "The rights of all women shall be accounted for, irrespective of their social class, age, educational attainment, country-of-origin, political affiliation and other demographic factors".

26. The Department of Gender Affairs has increased its staff within the past year. Two males are now also employed, one of whom is responsible for launching a new initiative that will focus on boys.
27. It is the department's intention to bolster the Project VIOLA initiative geared to teen mothers with an injection of funds from a regional funding agency.
28. Domestic Violence continues to be an area of focus for the government. With assistance from the Department of Gender Affairs, men are becoming more aware through training of gender based violence.
29. Among the recommendations referencing gender equality, under this theme were those encouraging additional programmes and policies to reduce poverty.
30. It is worthy of note that Two Country Poverty Assessments were conducted in St. Kitts and Nevis, over the years 1999/2000 and another in 2007/2008.
31. The result of those surveys reveals that the Federation had

significantly reduce its level of poverty. Whereas the 1999/2000 Country Poverty Assessment revealed that thirty and a half (30.5) percent of the nationals in St. Kitts and thirty two (32) percent in Nevis were poor, by 2007/2008, the poverty rate for the Federation had fallen by almost ten (10) percent.

32. St Kitts and Nevis was successful in achieving its Millenium Development Goal in significantly reducing poverty levels and through its robust and social protection strategies, continues to decrease the number of persons living below the poverty line.

Children's Rights

33. The delegation of St Kitts and Nevis is pleased to advise that the National Child Protection Protocol is now operational and now being implemented. This instrument has as its purpose to provide an effective and efficient framework to protect children who are, or who are likely to be, victims of abuse and neglect. It provides the minimum standards for prevention, investigation, reporting, judicial intervention, care, treatment and support of each case of child abuse and neglect.
34. The Protocol provides guidance to the agencies and professionals involved in child abuse cases: The Child

Welfare Board, the Department of Probation & Child Protection Services, St. Kitts-Nevis Police Force, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and other non-governmental agencies.

35. The Probation & Child Welfare Board will meet on a quarterly basis to ensure coordination and cooperation of the various agencies, organization and individuals, who by duty or otherwise, are involved in cases of abuse and neglect.
36. The overarching legal guide for the Protocol is the Probation and Child Welfare Board Act, 1994. However, other related legislation relevant to the issue of child abuse/neglect include, *inter alia*:
 - The Offences against the Person Act Chapter 4.21
 - The Criminal Law Amendment Act Chapter 4.05
 - The Small Charges Act Chapter 4.36

Right to health

37. The Federation of St Kitts and Nevis has been embarking on several initiatives to enhance the provision of health care and services to citizens. To reiterate significance of the link between health and human rights, I quote what the Minister of Health stated recently, "health coverage, or healthcare [is] a fundamental right, one of those

fundamental rights that are not written in our constitution.”

38. Although public sector workers enjoy a national health scheme, many citizens do not, and it is the Government's desire to be able to introduce a National Health Scheme in the near future. To this end, a committee has been formalised to devise a plan for comprehensive health coverage.
39. A health management information system is now operationalized at public health institutions in the Federation. This facility offers a more seamless and less time-consuming process at the doctor's office, the pharmacy and the other health institutions, including hospitals and clinics.
38. The health smart card and will benefit from the expanded service to include all public hospitals in the Federation by the end of the first quarter of this year. The card is an integral part of the Hospital Information System (HIS) and the expansion of its use should begin by the end of March 2016.
39. St Kitts and Nevis is soon to have access to a state-of-the-art cancer treatment centre. This unit will provide chemotherapy at the main hospital. To make this facility accessible special arrangements will be made for patients who are wards of the government and some without insurance or who cannot afford private care.

Right to social security and to an adequate standard of living

40. Spanning a five-year period (2013-2107), the National Social Protection Strategy is being implemented and the Social Protection Bill is soon to be tabled in Parliament.

Right to education

41. The Federation established all-inclusive education, health and social security systems beginning in the late 1960's that resulted in relatively high average rates of human and social development. It has made major progress in the provision of education services to its population, particularly with regard to primary and secondary education. The soon-to-be-completed Education Policy Review of the St. Kitts and Nevis Education sector, currently being undertaken by UNESCO, will assist the Federation in "developing a meaningful competency driven curriculum that has at its centre 21st Century skills."

Mr President, I pause to give the floor to the list of speakers for their valuable comments.

Conclusion

Mr President, the delegation of St Kitts of Nevis wishes to thank all for the recommendations made in the best interest of human rights in general. We also wish to express appreciation to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights for its continued assistance and other

international agencies who will partner with us as we seek to implement the recommendations of the second cycle.

St Kitts and Nevis reiterates its commitment to the UPR process and looks forward with renewed anticipation to sharing its achievements with the HRC over the next few years.

We remind of our pledge to submit a mid-term report which will highlight the advances we would have made to that date.

Thank you.

