

## On Women's Day, OACPS Secretary-General pledges to “continue to challenge” to aid OACPS women to contribute to their communities and fully realise their potential

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**STATEMENT BY H.E. MR. GEORGES REBELO PINTO CHIKOTI, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE ORGANISATION OF AFRICAN, CARIBBEAN AND PACIFIC STATES (OACPS) ON THE OCCASION OF INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY 2021**

*Brussels, 8 March 2021/OACPS:* International Women's Day is a global celebration of women's social, economic, cultural and political achievements. It is a day to take stock of what has been achieved and what still needs to be done to help forge a truly gender equal world. The theme for the 2021 observation of Women's Day, 'Choose to challenge', gives each and every person the individual responsibility to challenge the status quo to create a world that respects the contributions made by women.

The Secretary-General of the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), H.E. Mr Georges Rebelo Pinto Chikoti, on this day that celebrates women's achievements and raises awareness about women's equality, shares his wholehearted support of the principles which buttress this observation.

It has been roughly a year that the world has changed dramatically as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. As we aim to put this fraught period behind us, we are keenly aware of the role played by women the world over, working side-by-side on the frontlines to battle the pandemic in industries from health to agriculture. Yet while women have progressed considerably since International Women's Day was first celebrated over 110 years ago, they still make up more than two-thirds of the world's 796 million illiterate people, just 39% of rural girls attend secondary school and, as we saw during the lockdown, they are still – far too often – victims of violence, sadly, even in their own homes.

On assuming office, a little over a year ago, Secretary-General Chikoti, in recognition of the importance of gender parity, pledged to appoint a gender-balanced executive management team; a promise made and kept, with the appointment of three, female OACPS leaders to round off the six-person leadership team. As the OACPS undergoes a restructuring to become fit-for-purpose, it remains committed to the aims of the Nairobi *Nguvu Ya Pamoja* Declaration, adopted by ACP Heads of State and Government at the 9th Summit in December 2019, ACP Heads, to “recognise the crucial role of women and girls in fostering social mobility of their families and the transformation of economies, and commit to the elimination of discriminatory laws and policies, which entrench existing inequalities and widen the gaps in socio-economic and political development of women and girls in ACP States”.

Secretary-General Chikoti, as he continues to create a world-class OACPS, pledges to “continue to challenge” to ensure, that in keeping with Sustainable Development Goal #5, women everywhere and in particular, within the OACPS, will be able to enjoy unfettered access to justice and equal access to education and social goods, to enable them to contribute to their communities and to fully realise their potential.

Photo: OACPS Executive Leadership Team 2020-2025

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