

## Hon. Boyce addresses CPA Conference in The Bahamas

Politics in the Turks and Caicos Islands, the Caribbean and the Commonwealth has been made much stronger through the contribution of women and their impact on the decision-making process, said the Hon. Dr. Lillian Boyce, Minister of Education, Youth, Sports, Arts, Culture, Gender Affairs and Social Development.

Speaking during first ever, Commonwealth Parliamentary Association (CPA) Women's Conference which was held in Nassau, The Bahamas last weekend, Hon. Boyce said that no political system or institution can be successful or effective without the input or contribution of women to the decision-making process.

She noted that in the case of the Turks and Caicos Islands, women like the Hon. Arabella Smith, a former Minister of Education, and Mrs. Emily Saunders and Mrs. Rosita Butterfield who were former speakers of Parliament, were among the many women who made outstanding contributions to the development of the Turks and Caicos Islands, especially in the areas of health and education.

“Over years, it has almost become a tradition in the Turks and Caicos Islands for women in politics to be given responsibility for social ministries such as education and health and this I believe has led to a situation where, as the most developing countries in the Caribbean, we still have an extremely strong social fabric,” she said.

Hon. Boyce noted that because of the various and increasing number of issues that continue to affect females, there will be stronger and more compelling reasons for more and more women to become involved in the decision-making process and let their voices be heard and their presence felt.

“We as women in Caribbean and Commonwealth politics therefore have a duty and a responsibility to ensure that we consolidate the gains that we have made and that we continue to play even greater roles in the decision-making process and affairs of our respective countries,” she said, adding that the inaugural conference is a brilliant first step in the right direction and that she was delighted, honoured and humbled to be a part of this distinguished meeting of minds that have come together to chart a brighter and more prosperous course for the future.

She added: “Because many of us are the products of matri-focal families and environments, we have acquired and adopted a natural inclination to effectively understand and manage all types of complex situations and issues. It is therefore my submission that what we have been witnessing on the regional political scene in recent times, is a natural evolution and extension of that leading role which women played in the wider society, into the male-dominated field of politics.”

The Minister noted that the conference, which was declared open by Prime Minister of The Bahamas Perry Christie, took place at a time when women in politics are assuming more leading roles all around the world.

She took the opportunity to pay tribute to Jamaica's first female Prime Minister Portia Simpson-Miller, who is the fourth female Caribbean leader after Dominica's former Prime Minister Eugenia Charles, Guyana's former president Janet Jagan, and Bermuda's former premier Jennifer Smith.

Quoting from a book, "The Politics of Change", by former Jamaican Prime Minister, the late Michael Manley, she stated: "Social justice and commonsense alike dictate the need for a systematic programme of legislation and institutional modification to the end that women take their full and equal part as dynamic and involved participants in society and contributors to the process of change. Economic development must be planned with the needs of women fully in mind. In this way, one will simultaneously satisfy the principle of equality and release to the use and benefit of society, the enormous reservoir of energy and talent that is locked away in the female population."