



**Statement by Mr Cletus Springer, Chair of the Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI)  
to the Sixth Plenary Meeting of the 4<sup>th</sup> International Conference on SIDS**

The Caribbean Natural Resources Institute (CANARI) has worked with over 200 civil society partners regionally and globally to develop a position paper entitled ***The Caribbean We Want: Civil society recommendations for transformative pathways to Caribbean sustainable development***<sup>1</sup>, outlining four key recommendations for delivering Caribbean sustainable development:

1. Optimise the contribution of civil society through strong, mutually beneficial partnerships
2. Promote and support locally owned environmental and social enterprises
3. Incorporate environmental, social, climate and gender justice at all levels of governance
4. Pursue only development and disaster mitigation options that are in harmony with nature and aligned to social development objectives

“The Caribbean We Want” has so far been endorsed by over 80 Caribbean civil society organisations.

**The first message from Caribbean civil society highlights the need and the opportunity to optimise the contribution of civil society to delivering sustainable development through strong, mutually beneficial partnerships.**

The expertise, experience and local knowledge of civil society organisations contribute to sustainable development progress in major and often unacknowledged ways. Civil society is engaged in research, policy development, awareness raising, capacity building, advocating for and amplifying the voices of vulnerable or marginalised people calling for climate justice, and developing and delivering innovative solutions on the ground.

More effective support to civil society would require its full incorporation in democratic governance and decision-making, establishing formal partnerships and ensuring that civil society has access to adequate and appropriate financing and technical support.

**The second message is that there should be enhanced support for locally owned environmental and social enterprises, which drive local economic development, economic inclusion and poverty reduction.**

This involves designing legislation and regulations which support these enterprises, that are a unique hybrid of for-profit and non-profit models. It also means providing tailored business support and micro-financing for incubation. Supporting nature-based community enterprises to build resilience to climate change along their value chains will be especially important.

**The third message from Caribbean civil society is a call for recognition and action to address how intertwined climate, environmental and socio-economic crises disproportionately impact the most vulnerable and marginalised in society.**

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<sup>1</sup> [https://canari.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Caribbean-We-Want\\_March-2024.pdf](https://canari.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/04/Caribbean-We-Want_March-2024.pdf)

A better understanding of intersectional social, environmental, climate and gender justice issues is needed to inform targeted action. Civil society is calling on all Caribbean countries to follow the examples of Jamaica and Guyana and make a region-wide commitment to enshrine a right to a healthy environment in all national constitutions. This needs to be supported with laws and policies that assure this right is considered in decision-making and that citizens have recourse in the courts to protect it. Caribbean countries should join as Parties to an environmental treaty which supports the human right to a healthy environment - the Regional Agreement on Access to Information, Public Participation and Justice in Environmental Matters in Latin America and the Caribbean (the Escazú Agreement).

**In its fourth message, Caribbean civil society wants to see development and disaster mitigation options to be in harmony with nature and aligned to climate resilience and social development objectives.**

This will include integrating nature-based solutions which protect ecosystems and contribute to food and water security, climate adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity restoration and conservation, and nature-based livelihoods. Governments also need to support local adaptation and development planning, working with and through community organisations that are on the frontline of the climate crisis and can ensure that actions are responsive to local needs, especially of the most vulnerable groups. This will require localising development and climate finance to ensure it reaches the places where it is most needed and that we're investing in our local communities and the natural ecosystems that support them.

**In closing,** Caribbean civil society knows that implementing the 10-year sustainable development agenda is too big for governments alone or even together. It must be a collective effort, one that civil society is ready and able to be a part of, in a whole of society approach to achieve a green, just, resilient and prosperous future in SIDS.