

## **High-level Regional Consultation in Grenada calls for Joint Action toward a Model Law to Protect Women and Girls From Gender-based Digital Violence**

*St. George's, July 9, 2025* — Grenada was the host country for a two-day high-level consultation on the Draft Inter-American Model Law to Prevent, Punish, and Eradicate Gender-based Digital Violence against Women held on July 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> in St. George's. Organized by the Follow-up Mechanism to the Belém do Pará Convention (MESECVI) and the Ministry of Social and Community Development, Housing and Gender Affairs of Grenada, with the support of the European Union's Inclusive Societies programme and the Italian Republic, the consultation issued a strong call for joint regional efforts to protect all women and girls in the hemisphere from digital violence.

The Experts of the Committee of Experts (CEVI) of the MESECVI were central to the consultation: Sherna Alexander Benjamin, Vice President of the CEVI (Trinidad and Tobago); Elaine Henry-McQueen (Grenada); Cona Husbands (Guyana); Hasani McDonald (Saint Kitts and Nevis); and Miriam Roache (Saint Vincent and the Grenadines). They were joined by Jamie Saunders, Executive Director of the Directorate of Gender Affairs of Antigua and Barbuda and Competent National Authority to the MESECVI. The process was further supported by Luz Patricia Mejía Guerrero, Technical Secretary of the MESECVI; Yasmin Odlum, Caribbean Specialist and Regional Coordinator from the Inter-American Commission of Women (CIM); and Eva Villarreal Pascual, Specialist from the MESECVI Technical Secretariat, all of whom played a key role in facilitating the consultation and fostering regional dialogue.

The high-level consultation brought together more than 50 governmental authorities mainly from legal, gender and cybersecurity sectors; representatives of civil society organizations and international agencies such as UN Women and the Canadian cooperation agency CUSO International. This pioneering event for the MESECVI marked a key step in deepening the meaningful contribution of the Caribbean to the regional drafting process of the Inter-American Law. With this meeting, Grenada became the eighth country to host an in-person consultation as part of the regional process to develop the Inter-American Model Law on gender-based digital violence against women.

In her opening remarks, Senator the Honourable Gloria A. Thomas—Minister of State with responsibility for Social Development and Gender Affairs and Principal Delegate of Grenada to the CIM, called for strong regional cooperation to confront the evolving challenges of digital violence. She stressed that “together we can turn the digital world from a source of harm into a space of safety, dignity, and empowerment for every woman and girl in our region.”

Sherna Alexander Benjamin, Vice President of the CEVI and Expert from Trinidad and Tobago also emphasized the importance of aligning the Model Law with the lived experiences of women in the Caribbean and across the hemisphere. She noted that “the Inter-American Model Law is a crucial step forward. It provides a comprehensive framework, rooted in the Belém do Pará Convention, to address the evolving threat of digital violence.”

Luz Patricia Mejía Guerrero, Technical Secretary of the MESECVI, in reaffirming the urgency of advancing regional action, also highlighted the accelerated transition from offline to digital forms of violence. She warned that these manifestations not only affect women and girls but entire communities, underscoring that “this moment calls on us to deepen our understanding of this phenomenon and to take action.”

Joining the meeting online, Alfonso Martínez-Sáenz, Head of the Gender and Social Rights components of the European Union’s Inclusive Societies Programme, highlighted the importance of building bridges between regions in the face of global challenges. “We are eager to work together, to learn from your experiences, and to strengthen the links between Latin America, the Caribbean, and Europe, particularly in addressing digital gender-based violence and climate change.”

The consultation also benefited from the distinguished presence of His Excellency Victor Clark, British Commissioner in Grenada; and contributions of Rosalie La Grenade-George representing the OAS General Secretariat Office in the country—reaffirming the broad regional and international support for this initiative.

Working in small groups over two days, the participants reviewed the chapters of the draft Model Law, identified legal and policy implications; and proposed recommendations to ensure the inclusion of the region’s perspectives and normative experiences and enhance the legal instrument.

The discussions highlighted shared concerns, such as ensuring equal access to technology for women and girls, accountability from digital platforms to address gender-based digital violence and fostering safe, inclusive digital spaces. An expressed regional priority is to have a coordinated regional response rooted in the Belém do Pará Convention capable of guiding concrete legal and policy action.

This Caribbean consultation reaffirms MESECVI’s commitment to inclusive and participatory processes in constructing regional standards to eradicate gender-based violence. The insights gathered throughout the eight national consultations and the various virtual meetings will contribute to a grounded and consolidated Inter-American Model Law, reinforcing efforts to strengthen States’ legal and policy responses to digital violence against women.