SPEAKING NOTES

Hon. Gloria Ann Thomas

Panel Discussion: "Drivers of Change to Ensure Access to Justice for Women, Adolescents and Girls"

Tuesday, December 2

1. Opening Remarks & Framing

- Thank you, Moderator.
- I am honoured to join this important conversation on advancing access to justice for women, adolescents, and girls—a matter that lies at the heart of our national commitment to gender equality and human rights.
- Access to justice is not merely about the courts—it is about dignity, safety, empowerment, and the ability of every woman and girl to live free from violence and discrimination.

2. Drivers of Change: What Must Shift?

Today I want to highlight **five key drivers of change** that have proven essential in Grenada's ongoing efforts and which I believe are equally urgent across our region.

Driver 1: Strong Laws That Protect—and Systems That Work Together

- Having laws on the books is not enough; they must translate into **real protection**.
- Grenada has taken steps such as:
    - Strengthening our Domestic Violence legislation
    - Advancing child protection frameworks
    - Expanding survivor-centred services
- But full access to justice requires **coordination across sectors**: police, health, education, social services, labour, ICT, and the courts.
- A woman or girl must experience the **same level of protection** no matter which door she enters.

Driver 2: Survivor-Centred, Gender-Responsive Justice Systems

- Justice cannot be traumatic.
- We must reduce intimidation, delays, and stigma.

- Grenada continues to invest in:
    - Training frontline responders in gender-responsive and child-sensitive approaches
    - Expanding psychosocial support services
    - Strengthening referral pathways, including for women and girls with disabilities
- A justice system must meet women where they are—not where the system is comfortable.

Driver 3: Data, Evidence and Listening to Women's Real Experiences

- Data is a driver of accountability.
- We cannot fix what we cannot measure.
- Strengthening administrative data systems, improving sex-age-disability disaggregated data, and consistently analysing trends allows us to identify gaps and act decisively.
- Equally important is **listening to women, adolescents, girls, LGBTQI+ persons, rural communities, and persons with disabilities**—their lived realities guide our reforms.

Driver 4: Prevention & Social Norms Change

- Access to justice is not only about response.
- It requires changing the **culture** that normalizes violence or discourages reporting.
- Through our Men's programmes, Parenting Education programmes, school-based empowerment curricula, and community outreach, Grenada is working to shift harmful power dynamics.
- When we change hearts and minds, we reduce violence, strengthen agency, and make justice systems more accessible.

Driver 5: Empowering Women, Adolescents & Girls with Knowledge and Confidence

- A girl who knows her rights is harder to silence.
- A woman who understands the justice system is harder to deny.
- We must continue to equip young people—especially those living with disabilities, migrant families, rural girls, and survivors—with knowledge on:
    - what their rights are
    - how to report.

Call to Collective Action

- Access to justice is not a single ministry's responsibility—it is a **national ecosystem**.
- It demands bold leadership, strong institutions, sustained investment, and a commitment to equity.
- Most importantly, it demands that we put women, adolescents, and girls at the centre—**not as victims, but as rights holders and drivers of change**.

Closing Thought

"Justice is not just a system. It is a promise—one that every woman and girl deserves to see fulfilled."

Thank you.