

**Presentation by Hon. Emma Hippolyte, Minister for Equity, Labour, Gender, Elderly
Affairs, Social Justice and Consumer Welfare**

Training, Reskilling and Upskilling for Green and Blue Jobs

Good morning, distinguished colleagues, fellow Ministers, and esteemed partners. I am honoured to join you, and represent Saint Lucia in this critical discussion on building the workforce our region needs for a sustainable future. Today, I will share our strategic approach to training, reskilling, and upskilling workers for the green and blue economies; sectors that are not only vital to our climate resilience but also to creating decent, productive jobs across the Caribbean.

In Saint Lucia, we have built a strong institutional foundation to deliver on this skills agenda. We have established a clear institutional framework anchored by two key bodies; the Saint Lucia Coalition for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (SLCTVET) and the Department of Labour.

While the Department of Labour does not execute the programmes itself, together with the TVET Council, we ensure quality, relevance, and coordination across our skills ecosystem.

Our approach to skills development for green and blue jobs rests on four strategic pillars that guide all our programmes and policies. These **are Skills Anticipation, Targeted Training, Equity and Inclusion and Regional Collaboration.**

These guiding principles have allowed us to recognize significant achievements, one of which is the **Skills for the Advancement of the Green Economy (SAGE) Apprenticeship Programme.** This Employer Mentorship programme focuses on green construction, solar photovoltaic installation, energy efficiency, and sustainable operations; all critical skills for our transition to a low-carbon economy. SAGE has certified over 180 workers across the Caribbean region, with 40 of those certifications earned by Saint Lucian workers.

We have also prioritized closing gender gaps in STEM fields, through the Renewable Energy Sector Development (RESDP) Scholarship Programme. Gender equity is central to our skills strategy and as such, this Programme seeks to address the under representation of women in STEM fields. Between 2022 and 2025, we awarded 32 scholarships to women pursuing degree programmes and professional certification in renewable energy, environmental science, marine studies, and data/ICT for sustainability.

To promote sustainability, the Youth Agriculture and Skills Investment Programme (YASIP) and training in sustainable finance, focuses on youth in climate-smart agriculture; training young people in agripreneurship, value addition, and sustainable farming practices.

We have trained over 15 finance professionals in environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria and climate finance tools, thus enabling financial institutions to assess and fund green and blue projects.

Beyond our formal training programmes, Saint Lucia has witnessed the emergence of innovative projects that exemplify the transformative potential of green and blue economy approaches combined with social inclusion. The Boys-to-Men Mushroom Agribusiness Employment Pilot Project, implemented through our Youth Economy Agency in partnership with the Caribbean Development Bank, has trained 50 vulnerable young men in mushroom cultivation and agribusiness management.

Equally groundbreaking, is the Inclusive Aquaponics for a Resilient Saint Lucia project, our nation's first aquaponics facility entirely led and operated by persons with disabilities. This system exemplifies blue-green economy convergence by conserving water through nutrient recycling between fish and plants, eliminating chemical fertilisers, and creating dignified employment for over 40 persons with disabilities, producing organic lettuce under the Organic-Able brand.

Despite these successes, we face real challenges that require honest acknowledgment and regional collaboration to address.

Demand for green and blue skills far outpaces our current training capacity. We simply cannot train workers fast enough to meet the needs of a rapidly transforming economy. We need more resources, more qualified trainers, more equipment, more training facilities, and greater financing.

Additionally, the gender gaps persist. Women remain underrepresented in STEM and blue economy sectors. Occupational segregation is deeply rooted, and changing it requires sustained, multi-pronged interventions.

Data gaps limit our ability to plan effectively. We need stronger labour market intelligence systems and tracer studies to track graduate outcomes and inform curriculum design.

These challenges are realities that must be addressed through regional cooperation, innovative financing, and political commitment. No single country can solve them alone.

Recognizing these challenges, we have identified four strategic priorities that will guide our work; and where we seek regional partnership.

We are developing a National Skills Development Strategy with a specific focus on green and blue skills. This will include strengthening our Labour Market Information System, enhancing quality assurance mechanisms, and setting clear targets for skills development aligned with our climate commitments.

We are deepening private-sector partnerships and scaling apprenticeships. Employers must be at the centre of skills development; they know what skills are needed, and they provide the workplace learning environments that make training effective.

We are also working through CARICOM to establish regional certification frameworks and portability of qualifications. Workers should be able to move across the region with recognized credentials. We are also exploring regional centres of excellence where countries pool resources for specialized training.

In addition, we are seeking climate finance to underwrite training infrastructure, equipment, and inclusion supports like stipends and childcare. Green and blue transitions require investment in people, not just technology.

These priorities cannot be achieved by Saint Lucia alone. We need regional collaboration, shared standards, joint training programmes, and coordinated advocacy for climate finance that includes skills development. This is an opportunity for Caribbean labour ministers to lead on building the workforce our region needs for a sustainable, prosperous future.

The transition to green and blue economies is not just about technology or capital; it is fundamentally about people and skills. If we invest in training, reskilling, and upskilling our workers, we can turn climate vulnerability into economic opportunity, create decent jobs, and build a more resilient Caribbean. Saint Lucia is committed to this work, and we look forward to deepening our collaboration with all of you. Thank you.