



THE CARIBBEAN COUNCIL FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED

As President of the Caribbean Council for the Blind and Visually Impaired (CCB-Eye Care Caribbean), I take this opportunity to greet you as we enter 2019.

Parts of our organisation are still weathering some very choppy financial waters so sections of our programmes have been negatively impacted during 2018. I am pleased to note that we are at the beginning end of recovering from some personnel losses, which severely affected aspects of our operations in one country.

In spite of those challenges, the CCB continues to deliver quality services across our region. We remain at the vanguard of advocacy for the blind/visually impaired communities of our region and are firmly committed to realising a world that includes and appreciates all of our citizens. CCB's unwavering commitment to purpose is driven by our realization that:

- i. Perhaps, half of our adult population needs prescription glasses to see normally
- ii. 1 in every thousand children of school age is blind
- iii. 3 in every thousand children of school age are low vision
- iv. 1% or more than 70,000 adults in the English-speaking Caribbean are blind

That is why, at our 50th anniversary meeting, in July 2018 (last year) CCB reaffirmed its steadfast support to our four key strategic themes:

- i. Sustainable programmes to prevent avoidable visual impairment and blindness
- ii. Sustainable inclusive education services for children and adults who are blind or low vision
- iii. Sustainable inclusive services for adults who are blind or low vision
- iv. Institutional and capacity development, governed by principles of inclusion and sustainability

We further encourage our members to remain firmly in support of the regional and international issues driving development in our sector including:

- i. The Sustainable Development Goals
- ii. Continued expansion of Vision 2020, the Right to sight
- iii. The Green Economy and its potentials for economic opportunities
- iv. The Ratification of the Treaty of Marrakesh
- v. The need for expanded access to braille and other tactile formats for learning
- vi. Expanded adjustment to Blindness services to people who have lost their sight.
- vii. More creative and inclusive economic opportunities for people who are blind

As President I urge you to let your voices be heard on issues that are happening in our countries/region; it is not enough to stand on the margins of our societies hoping that others will remember to address our needs. We each have a responsibility to our organisations, our members, other blind/visually impaired persons and ourselves to speak out and to be involved at every level of society. In this way, we will be able to guarantee that our issues will be at the forefront of advocacy initiatives. Make wise use of all the tools at your disposal; be it social media, call in programmes, traditional media or whatever