

Presentation
By
Hon. Rudyard Spencer, OD, MP
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To the
Annual Ministerial Review
Of the
Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Salutations

The Government of Jamaica is honoured to have hosted the Regional Preparatory Meeting on June 5 and 6 in the Latin America and the Caribbean on the “HIV and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean.”

We recognize the support of the United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs, (UNDESA), the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the United Nations Joint Programme for HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO).

We also recognize and commend the participation of the 103 participants from international, regional and non-governmental organizations and the private sector.

The meeting took stock of the progress made in controlling HIV in the region, analyzed the main obstacles in achieving further successes and discussed ways of making further advances in the prevention, treatment and care of HIV, towards the achievement of the HIV-related Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The ECOSOC meeting was organized around four panel discussions on the following themes:

1. Challenges of HIV as a development concern and the Latin American and Caribbean response;
2. Challenges and solutions in the response to HIV in Latin America and the Caribbean in reaching universal access goals;

3. Presentations of best practices and policies in response to HIV in the region; and,
4. Implication of the global financial crisis for HIV and health.

Four key messages emerged from the presentations and discussions:

1. Addressing HIV is central to public health, socio-economic development and human security;
2. The region must provide renewed leadership and keep HIV on national and regional agendas;
3. Prevention of HIV infection is a critical component in halting and reversing the HIV epidemic;

4. Urgent and increased investment and interventions are needed in support of human rights, including sexual rights, and social justice programmes in accordance with the legal framework of each country to address stigma, homophobia and discrimination.

A clear consensus of the participants is that future response to the epidemic must involve a multi-sectoral approach including the labour sector in order to address the social determinants of the epidemic. There was call for closer collaboration between the health and education sectors to address the needs of young people.

The delegates also agreed to formalize the Inter-sectoral Working Group as is mandated in the Ministerial Declaration “Preventing through Education” adopted in August 2008 in Mexico. The Working Group has been mandated to monitor the recommendations and resolutions of the Declaration.

Consensus was reached in eleven recommendations which are summarized as follows:

1. Member states should establish an Inter-sectoral Working Group to monitor the implementation of the commitments made in the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the 17th International Aids Conference in August in Mexico;
2. Governments need to develop a balanced approach to the HIV response that addresses the social, infrastructural and legal factors and barriers that underpin risk taking and vulnerability;
3. Investments should be targeted to strengthen integrated public health systems;

4. Government, labour and other partners must work together to develop and implement a comprehensive approach to HIV prevention in the workplace;
5. The strengthening of primary health care services, among other interventions such as integrated community-based care, are required to effectively scale-up HIV treatment;
6. Governments must promote the active engagement of the mass media and civil society in the promotion and implementation of comprehensive sexual education, promotion of sexual health and prevention of HIV;
7. Gender inequity needs to be addressed across development programming given the feminization of the epidemic;

8. Most-at-risk populations require targeted interventions, including outreach services and improved access to basic sexual health services

9. Health services must be provided in settings free from discrimination and homophobia and should include access to counseling, testing and comprehensive clinical care for HIV;

10. Antiretroviral drugs should be made available to all at lower costs;

11. Policy decisions and programmes must be based on high quality and timely research. Surveillance systems should be strengthened to capture where new cases are coming from and project where they are likely to arise.

Jamaica is now pleased to present the report of the Regional Preparatory Meeting on HIV and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean to the 2009 Annual Ministerial Review of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) for its deliberation and further action.

Thank you.