

June 6, 2009
Ritz Carlton
Montego Bay, Jamaica

CLOSING REMARKS
AT
ECOSOC MINISTERIAL REVIEW MEETING
DR. GRACE ALLEN-YOUNG
PERMANENT SECRETARY
MINISTRY OF HEALTH JAMAICA

Salutations

This meeting covered a broad range of issues and topics pertaining to HIV/AIDS and development in the Region. Our preoccupation with moving beyond clinical and technical solutions to HIV/AIDS represents a deep understanding of the complexities that are involved in our response to the epidemic.

A major success of the two-day meeting is that there continues to be a firm and unrelenting commitment to find concrete solutions to overcome the spread of the disease in the Region.

We were encouraged by the progress that is being made in many of our countries including improving access to ARV drugs. Persons with HIV/AIDS and who are in a treatment programme are living longer thanks to the sustained efforts of national governments and programmes and the indispensable support of the international community and the private sector.

Some of the challenges that were discussed include the present global financial crisis and the risk of eroding the gains that we have made in the progress toward achieving the MDGs. Even in the face of this crisis, there are new windows of opportunity which as a Region we must pursue.

The shifting epidemiological profile and disease burden of the Region raise concerns about balancing HIV with other public health conditions such as non communicable diseases (NCDs).

We all agreed that stigma and discrimination are undermining our ability to progress at a faster pace and that there is need for governments to address this. Once again, we are reminded that the Region faces the common historical condition of repression and the underlying effect on how human rights is perceived.

There were also interesting interventions from the floor especially in relation to stigma and discrimination.

There is a lot of work to be done in incorporating gender analysis into policy and programmes and for the Region to strengthen our capacity to assess and act on evidence of gendered impact.

We cannot ignore the call to strengthen integration and health systems.

The meeting was challenged by the Ministers of Health and Education to build more effective partnerships with focus on prevention and capacity building. The link between education and health was explored and discussed as important to our success in addressing HIV/AIDS.

I wish acknowledge all those who have contributed to the success of the meeting.

The host Ministers of health and Education who appropriately located HIV/AIDS within the broader social and development arena;

ECLAC, ECOSOC and the Government of Luxembourg for the financial and technical support that was critical to the success of the meeting;

The international community has been at the forefront of the global fight against HIV/AIDS. Your commitment to this Region is no less. We thank the UN and its various arms and PAHO/WHO for the support that they continue to give to this Region and to this Ministerial Review Meeting;

We thank the Planning Committee and the meeting Secretariat for ensuring that the proceedings took place smoothly;

The presence of so many countries at this meeting indicates that our individual and collective commitment to the HIV/AIDS agenda has not waned. Your presence sends a strong message to our peoples and the world that we will protect the advancements that we have made and to close the gaps that we have identified.

We have concluded two important meetings held over four consecutive days. The world must know that we will stay the course in those areas that we are doing well, find innovative approaches to persistent challenges and adapt to new and emerging developments that may present threats or opportunities for us.

We will go to Geneva with a strong and unified voice. The future demands revitalized and transformational leadership to provide our peoples with hope.

Thank you.