

STATEMENT BY HONOURABLE ANN PETERS  
MINISTER OF HEALTH, GRENADA

AT THE

UNITED NATIONS HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON THE COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW OF THE PROGRESS ACHIEVED IN  
REALIZING THE DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT ON  
HIV/AIDS AND THE POLITICAL DECLARATION ON HIV/AIDS, JUNE 10, 2011

Mr. President,  
Excellencies,  
Distinguished Delegates,  
Ladies and Gentlemen

Salutations

My delegation joins in extending sincere congratulations to you as Chairman of this significant High Level meeting and to the rest of your team. Equally, Grenada commends the Secretary General Ban Ki-Moon for convening this meeting to review global progress achieved on earlier commitments with regard to HIV and AIDS.

Mr. President, Grenada associates itself with the statement made on behalf of my region, the Caribbean Community, by the Honorable Dr. Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis.

I am delighted to bring warm greetings from Prime Minister The Honourable Tillman Thomas, who is here with us this morning, and the Government and people of Grenada and to briefly share with you, our achievements and vision within the context of this global review.

Continuing Challenges to or global ambition

We are meeting against the backdrop of the battle against HIV AIDS-- and recent progress tells us that the world is winning! For us in Grenada, we share in this progress, although a comprehensive response to HIV and AIDS is still a challenge, due mainly to taboo and stigmatization, social and religious norms, limited trained human and financial resources and the need for more public education. Today, we report our progress and record that there is much more we can and need to undertake in order to reach higher levels of accomplishment.

Progress

For over a decade now, the Grenada National Infectious Disease Control Unit has been mandated to respond to the HIV-AIDS challenge, with responsibility for the leadership which has brought results:

- \* Over 80 percent of women participating in ante-natal clinics accept testing at their visit, in response to protocols introduced in 2007;
- \* We have begun to see vast improvements in the prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT), and in 2010, Grenada achieved the first of the three targeted zeros: no child born to an HIV-infected women has tested positive. We are convinced that this is the result of a strategic approach of a rights-based approach and the integration of prevention into primary health care; we are convinced that this model be used again for achieving the other two zeros.
- \* Prophylactic therapy is given to babies within 72 hours of birth and these babies receive milk formula support for the first six months of life.
- \* We have seen an increase in the numbers of young persons who voluntarily test and this has come as a result of investments in public awareness, the growing confidence of young persons in services provided and the reduction of stigmatization.

In the area of treatment and care, the use of highly active antiretroviral medication, (HAART), since 2003 has made it possible to put all patients known to the public health system on treatment and to significantly increase the numbers having access from services.

Home visits and medication pickups as well as referrals to other specialists are making the difference to the quality of life for People Living with HIVs.

Our surveillance and research work benefits from a manual produced for this purpose with World Bank funding, and a Knowledge, Attitude Behavior and Practice Survey, funded by the Global Fund has just been undertaken.

Mr. President, still, Grenada's achievements are more, including rapid test training, the completion of the Knowledge, Attitude, Behavior and Practice Survey, local and regional training for staff and medical personnel, and increasing inter-sectoral participation in annual World AIDS Day activities. All these results emanate from our core conviction -- that the human rights of all Grenadians, with no distinction whatsoever, must be honored, in health as in all constitutionally mandated rights; this is fundamental. The National AIDS Council with wide multi-sectoral representation.

#### HIV AIDS Compounds Vulnerability

The impact of HIV and AIDS strikes at the very heart of the rural sector, where poverty is wide-spread among the youthful population between the ages of 15-29. This results in compounding the overall social and economic vulnerability of our small island. This calls for an even stronger multisectoral approach similar to what we have undertaken, where health is integrated into all other sectors. We view and respond to health as a macroeconomic pillar of development. We know now, that the HIV AIDS epidemic *can* be defeated and having scored the first zero, that is (I repeat), zero mother to child transmission, we in Grenada have only two zeros to score! But in Grenada, the full removal of discrimination and the elimination of related deaths can be attained with national will, regional solidarity and international collaboration.

#### The Political Declaration

That is why we welcome the Political Declaration from this meeting, with its integrated approach of leadership, commitment, integration, financing and dogged determination and application for sustained progress. Indeed, Mr. President, careful and comprehensive global assessments and what we have heard over the past 3 days, insist that "HIV and AIDS *can be beaten*" Despite the debilitating impact of the economic downturn on my country and the Caribbean region as a whole, Grenada commits to these aspirations and plans to accomplish these goals are well on the way.

We place on record our sincerest appreciation to all our donors and look forward to continued collaboration.