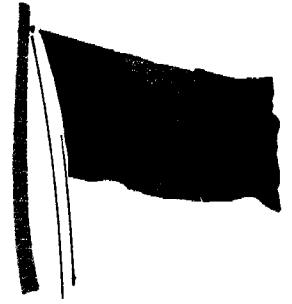




*Permanent Mission  
of Barbados to  
the United Nations*



**STATEMENT BY**

**REV. THE HON. JOSEPH ATHERLEY  
MINISTER OF STATE  
PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE  
BARBADOS**

**TO THE**

**TWENTY-SIXTH SPECIAL SESSION OF THE  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON HIV/AIDS**

**JUNE 2, 2006**

**United Nations Headquarters  
New York**

*Please check against delivery*

Mr. President,

**Catastrophic      Devastating Dehumanising      Debilitating**

These words capture the essence of the epidemic currently wreaking havoc worldwide. In a small island developing state such as Barbados, the impact has also been great.

Characterised by my Government's political support at the highest level, the Barbados National AIDS Programme since 2001 has launched a national sensitisation campaign, embarked on the widespread provision of highly active antiretroviral therapy, sought to provide decentralised psychosocial support services, conducted operational research to drive policies and programmes and strengthened multi-sectoral partnerships at all levels.

These efforts, despite their importance to the fight against the epidemic, have not proven to be as successful as we would have liked, and have reinforced our commitment to provide universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support programmes for not only vulnerable and marginalised groups but for the general population as a whole.

Meeting the goal to mitigate the impact of the disease on the Barbadian population necessitates access to a broad spectrum of resources including functional facilities, current information, skilled professionals, adequate financing and the elimination of barriers to access and availability of resources.

Denial of access to international funding based on global comparison essentially ignores the dynamics of the epidemic, within the local context, and condemns middle-income countries like Barbados to fighting a losing battle in real costs.

Mr. President,

Although there is much attention being placed on the second wave countries in Asia, may I remind you that the Caribbean region remains second only to Sub-Saharan Africa in terms of prevalence.

We in Barbados have been able to break the proverbial back of the epidemic as it relates to treatment. Since the opening of our state-of-the-art antiretroviral treatment facility in 2002, we have successfully reduced the mortality rate among persons living with HIV/AIDS by more than 50%.

Unfortunately, we are not in a position to make a similar boast in the area of prevention.

Empirical data reveals that while knowledge levels are relatively high, there is little evidence that this has translated into changes in sexual behaviour.

Multi-partnering, inconsistent condom use and early sexual initiation are making our prevention efforts difficult. There is, therefore, an urgent need for targeted communication campaigns if the incidence of the disease among key populations is to decrease.

We will continue to adhere to the principles of GIPA ensuring that all persons living with HIV and AIDS have uninhibited access to quality prevention and treatment programmes.

Over the last five years, much has happened. Millennium goals and targets have been set and the Global Fund has been established and is currently chaired by Barbados.

There can be no excuse for passivity or denial, when collectively by the sheer numbers of our constituencies we have the capacity to lead nations out of the path of misery.

I thank you.