



**REMARKS BY
AMBASSADOR LOLITA APPLEWHAITE
SECRETARY-GENERAL (AG)
CARIBBEAN COMMUNITY (CARICOM)**

**ON THE OCCASION
OF THE
TWENTY-FIRST MEETING OF THE COUNCIL FOR HUMAN AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT
(COHSOD) – (HEALTH)**

**GEORGETOWN, GUYANA
15 APRIL 2011**

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- ❖ Dr. the Honourable Leslie Ramsammy, Minister of Health of the Republic of Guyana and Chairman of the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD)
- ❖ Senator Ann Peters, Minister of Health, Grenada and outgoing Chairperson of COHSOD
- ❖ Honourable Carolyn Rodrigues-Birkett, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade of the Republic of Guyana
- ❖ Other Honourable Ministers of Government of Member States
- ❖ Your Excellencies, ambassadors accredited to the Caribbean Community
- ❖ Distinguished Delegates
- ❖ Heads of Regional Institutions
- ❖ Members of the Diplomatic Corps
- ❖ Members of Staff of the CARICOM Secretariat
- ❖ Representatives of the Media
- ❖ Ladies and Gentlemen

The theme of this Twenty-first Meeting of the Council for Human and Social Development (COHSOD) on Health, “Promoting Equity in Human Development through

Public Health” continues the commitment proclaimed in the Nassau Declaration that the *“Health of the Region is the Wealth of the Region.”*

In that Declaration of 2001, the Heads of Government of the Community committed themselves to the pursuit of initiatives and targets to achieve an improved health status for our populations within the next five years. These initiatives would emphasise leadership, strategic planning, management, implementation and resource mobilisation in the context of health sector reform in the Region. Our Heads of Government identified in particular, the areas of HIV/AIDS, Chronic Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs) and Mental Health.

In the same year of that Declaration, the Pan Caribbean Partnership Against HIV/Aids (PANCAP) was established. The Community is therefore marking the tenth anniversary of two most significant events in the area of health.

When PANCAP was established ten years ago, as a partnership, mandated by the Heads of Government of CARICOM, principally to mobilise resources and coordinate the Region’s response to HIV/AIDS, few could have imagined the growth of the Partnership and the international acclaim it would receive.

PANCAP has been an outstanding example of what can be achieved through functional cooperation among partners at all levels and its achievements since its inception have been well documented. There is no doubt of the Partnership’s significant contribution to the gains that have been made in the Region’s response to HIV/AIDS. In some countries there has been a stabilisation of the epidemic, while in others there has been some reduction in the prevalence of infections. Importantly, as an example, fifty percent of those in need of Anti Retro Viral drugs (ARVs) have access to them; this is well above the global average of thirty percent.

There are still challenges that confront us with respect to prevention programmes for the most at-risk populations, and stigma and discrimination remain major obstacles. Also,

many of our organisations of persons living with HIV/AIDS are struggling to survive. Combating these challenges will call for increased advocacy at a time when available funds are threatened by the global financial and economic crises.

It is therefore a significant vote of confidence in the strategies and actions employed by CARICOM, that the Global Fund to Fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) has entrusted just under US\$30 million to the Region to continue the struggle. These grant funds, which will be advanced in two phases, will support a Strategic Regional Approach to help develop the systems needed to deal with those persons most at-risk, including young and especially young persons. The funds will be used in the areas of Prevention, Supporting Environment and Treatment. We extend our appreciation to the Fund.

The Region looks forward to the United Nations (UN) High Level Meeting on HIV/AIDS which will take place in New York, USA on 8-10 June 2011 and is expected to shape the future agenda for the international and regional response to the disease, building on lessons learnt over the past ten years since the first UNGASS on HIV/AIDS. PANCAP and CARICOM in consultation with UNAIDS have initiated a process to support our New York-based Missions and Heads of Government who will be participating in that Meeting.

Madam Chairman, that leadership and prominence in the Health sector which is evident with PANCAP, is also reflected in our approach to dealing with Chronic Non-communicable Diseases. The Report of the Commission on Health and Development established by our Heads of Government and chaired by the Honourable Sir George Alleyne OCC resulted in a CARICOM Summit in September 2007, the first of its kind in the world. The Declaration of Port-of-Spain emanating from that landmark Summit outlined the framework for what has been deemed *The Wellness Revolution*. Indeed, Caribbean Wellness Day has been so successful that it has now grown beyond the boundaries of CARICOM Member States and being celebrated internationally.

That Summit also initiated the actions and advocacy leading to the UN High Level Meeting on NCDs which will take place in New York, USA on 19-20 September. This event, which will feature high level representatives from the membership of the UN, is testimony to what collective action of the Community can achieve. We thank in particular, our Permanent Representatives to the UN for their leadership in bringing this important global event to fruition.

It is essential, therefore, that our Member States participate in the preparatory meetings and advocate at the international levels for appropriate high level representation at the meeting and for actions that will benefit the Region coming out of the meeting.

Mr. Chairman, Honourable Ministers, the establishment of the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA), ten years after the Nassau Declaration, will be a fitting milestone marking our efforts to ensure that health is propelled to the centre of the development process. This COHSOD Meeting will review the progress made with regard to the implementation of CARPHA and address the preparation for the Second Partners Meeting to be held in June in Washington D.C., USA. Under the leadership of the Lead Head of Government responsible for Human Resource Development, Health and HIV/AIDS, the Honourable Dr. Denzil Douglas, Prime Minister of St. Kitts and Nevis, we have managed to generate significant international attention to CARPHA and need to ensure that the momentum is maintained.

The creation of this centre of excellence, that would be CARPHA, would contribute greatly to the potential of the Region to deal more effectively with health surveillance, response to health emergencies and promotion of preventive health. Its establishment will realise significant economic gains for the Region.

The Region will be looking to this COHSOD Meeting for ideas and actions promoting even further, the development of the health sector and give further substance to the theme of the Nassau Declaration - "The Health of the Region is the Wealth of the Region."

In this regard, I wish you fruitful deliberations.

I thank you.