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*Permanent Mission  
of Barbados to  
the United Nations*



**STATEMENT BY**

**THE RT. HON. OWEN S. ARTHUR  
PRIME MINISTER OF BARBADOS**

**TO THE  
58<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS  
GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

**HIGH-LEVEL PLENARY MEETINGS DEVOTED TO THE  
FOLLOW-UP TO THE OUTCOME OF THE TWENTY-  
SIXTH SPECIAL SESSION: IMPLEMENTATION OF  
THE DECLARATION OF COMMITMENT ON HIV/AIDS**

**SEPTEMBER 22, 2003**

**UNITED NATIONS HEADQUARTERS**

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Mr. President,

It is my pleasure to congratulate you, as a son of the Caribbean, on your historic election to preside over the 58<sup>th</sup> Session of the General Assembly.

We are currently in the throes of an historic transition in mankind's affairs. On a scale never before contemplated nor experienced, the energies and the resources of a significant portion of the international global community are increasingly being deployed to fight the terrorist threat to global security.

As such, the great goals of global development - the eradication of poverty, relief from hunger - are hardly being achieved and appear to be less than urgently addressed.

There is, however an enduring moral agenda from which we dare not withdraw.

For it is a sobering thought that over and above the social havoc that the HIV/AIDS pandemic has wrought, it offers itself as a greater threat to global economic stability and development than market failures and policy disturbances.

There is now, therefore, a moral obligation for all of us to declare and to treat the HIV/AIDS pandemic for what it is - the single greatest threat to human security.

We must also now dare to think of the health of the whole human race as a realisable objective.

For he who has health has hope; and he who has hope, has everything.

I am here today to re-affirm Barbados' pledge to support the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and the Declaration of Commitment adopted at UNGASS 2001.

As a founding member of the Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS, we wish to renew our commitment to work in harmony with our neighbours to relieve our region of a threat to stability and security which is only exceeded by that faced by sub-Saharan Africa.

My presence here today also signals in the strongest possible way the resolve of an entire nation and people to spare no effort in countering **OUR** nation's single greatest threat.

Barbados' experience points to the fact that with the requisite effort the war against HIV/AIDS can be won.

Early in 2001 my Government initiated an expanded, multi sectoral response to the epidemic. This includes investing the Prime Minister's Office with responsibility for giving strategic

direction to the National Programme, and overseeing the implementation of initiatives at the ministerial level.

We also forged new creative partnerships across our civil society geared to achieving the goals of a 50% reduction in mortality by 2004 and a 50% reduction in incidence by 2006.

We are providing Highly Active Anti-Retro Viral Therapy free of cost to all our eligible citizens living with HIV/AIDS. After the first year of this expanded national programme, I am pleased to report that the deaths from AIDS have been reduced by 43%. We have achieved a six-fold reduction in mother-to-child transmission maintaining levels of less than 6% transmission over five years.

We recognise, however, that we have much still to accomplish.

Having made great strides at the level of treatment, we must now strengthen our programme of prevention, putting our emphasis on activities to induce behaviour change.

For, ultimately, the only successful way by which to win wars is to prevent them occurring.

My Government also proclaims its dedication to the creation and enforcement of supportive laws, full empowerment of the HIV/AIDS community and the eradication of AIDS-related stigma and discrimination.

We are committed to the global fight against HIV/AIDS and urge the replenishment of the Global Fund.

As a mark of that commitment, my Government hereby pledges to contribute \$100,000 to the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

Let us go forward together in this battle fortified by the conviction that those who labour in the service of a great and good cause **WILL** never fail.