

**ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review  
Regional Ministerial Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean on  
“HIV and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean”**

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**Session V: From Montego Bay to Geneva**

Honourable Ministers,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have had two days of rich and productive discussions.

As you know, this gathering is part of the preparatory process of the 2009 Annual Ministerial Review on global public health, to be held during the High-Level segment of the Economic and Social Council in Geneva in July.

A number of messages and recommendations have emerged from our discussions over the past two days. A report summarizing the fruitful exchanges we have had will be presented by the Government of Jamaica on 6 July and serve as a basis for discussion among Members States on actions to take in the field of global public health.

I will now highlight some of the key messages and recommendations that have come out from our discussions over the past two days. The floor will then be open for your comments, feedback and inputs.

**Key Messages**

- Addressing HIV is central to global, regional and national public health, socio-economic development and human security. Addressing HIV presents common challenges across countries that require common solutions.
- The region must provide renewed leadership and keep HIV on national and regional agendas. Current investments in HIV must be maintained and/or increased, with a focus on integrated development approaches. Importance should be given to ‘low-cost’ initiatives that have proven effective in tackling HIV and that reach the local level.

- Prevention of HIV infection is a critical component in reversing the HIV epidemic. Significant increases will be required in prevention coverage as a key component to reducing infections, particularly among most-at-risk population, for which prevalence rates are significantly higher across the region.
- As stigma, homophobia and discrimination represent perhaps the single greatest barrier to attaining the HIV-related Goal, urgent and increased investment is needed in support of human rights, including sexual rights, and social justice programmes.

## **Recommendations**

- Member States should establish without delay an Inter-sectoral Working Group to follow up on the commitments made in the Ministerial Declaration adopted at the 17<sup>th</sup> International AIDS Conference in August 2008 in Mexico.
- Governments need to develop a balanced approach to comprehensive prevention, care and treatment programming that is evidenced-based and addresses the social, infrastructural and legal factors and barriers that underpin risk-taking and vulnerability.
- Investments should be targeted to strengthening integrated public health systems. Multi-sectoral approaches to health communication and health service delivery should be a key component of this integrated approach.
- To effectively scale up HIV treatment, it will be critical to decentralize service delivery points; integrate community-based care and informal social networks; and de-stigmatize the provision of HIV services by removing the element of 'identifiable' HIV facilities.
- Governments must promote the active engagement of the mass media and civil society for dissemination of information on sexual education and prevention of HIV. Health promotion programmes should include ample participation of communities and families, including adolescents and youth.
- Gender inequity needs to be addressed across development programming through specific and targeted interventions, and in particular the empowerment of women, given the impact of the epidemic on women throughout the region.
- Most-at-risk populations, such as men who have sex with men, sex workers, and injecting drug users require targeted outreach and interventions, including improved access to basic sexual health services, aimed at

improving access to information and services and reducing risk-taking behaviour.

- We must ensure that health services provide access to counselling, testing and comprehensive clinical care for HIV, counselling about reproductive decisions, and counselling and treatment for drug and alcohol abuse.
- Antiretroviral drugs should be made available at lower costs.
- Policy decisions and programme must be based on high quality and timely research. Strengthened surveillance systems that routinely capture all those affected by the epidemic, including those most at risk and vulnerable (women, prisoners, drug users) is the basic tenet upon which country responses should be based. Surveillance systems should also capture where new cases are coming from and project where they are likely to arise; whether the epidemic is increasing, stabilizing or decreasing; and profiles and numbers of people living with HIV.

I will stop here, and look forward to your feedback.