



PERMANENT MISSION OF BELIZE TO THE
UNITED NATIONS

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STATEMENT

BY

**HONOURABLE PABLO MARIN
MINISTER OF HEALTH OF BELIZE**

AT THE

**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**

NEW YORK, 09 JUNE 2011

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Mr. President,

Excellencies,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We meet today; three decades after the first cases of a disease we now know as AIDS were first reported in June of 1981, to undertake a comprehensive review of the progress achieved in realizing the 2001 Declaration of Commitment on HIV/AIDS and the 2006 Political Declaration on HIV/AIDS.

Let me at the outset acknowledge the active presence of Belizean civil society members as part of our delegation to this High Level Meeting.

I wish to thank the Secretary General for his report. Indeed many of the global trends are mirrored in the national experience of my own country: declining infection rates, increase in access to treatment, increasing feminization of HIV and with the age group 15 – 24 year continuing to be the major age group affected with new HIV infections.

My government is fully aware of the deep impact of HIV/AIDS across social, economic and development spheres, and we know how that impact is magnified in a small diverse population – which presents its own unique challenges.

Nevertheless my government remains firm in its commitment to a national response that is sustained and effective.

Mr. President,

Even though Belize has the highest prevalence rate of HIV in Central America and one of the highest in the Caribbean, much has been done, particularly, in the latter part of the last decade. Our response has been immediate, targeted and dynamic, including a multi-sectoral partnership, robust policies, and international support. At the end of 2010, there were an estimated 5,394 persons living with either HIV or AIDS in Belize but the year 2010 also marked a notable achievement as for the second consecutive year there has been a decrease in the total number of new HIV infections. Belize is one of the few countries which has seen a 33% decrease in the number of new infections. We are equally pleased to report that our prevention of mother to child transmission (PMTCT) has a coverage rate of pregnant women that is almost 95% over the last 5 years and the transmission rate is now below 6%; this continued success can be highlighted as a best practice in the Caribbean region.

At the end of 2010, the total coverage of persons needing medical treatment was above 70%, a clear demonstration of government's commitment to the scaling up of treatment and support services in order to reach the goal of complete universal access by 2015.

We must be innovative in the way we approach and address the ever growing dynamics of this disease, especially in the current global financial and economic crisis. While developing countries such as ours, must seek to adequately invest in documented cost effective interventions and best practices, and seize national ownership at all levels to maintain our successes and overcome challenges, the international community must also honour its commitments in order to be able consolidate our collective achievements.

Mr. President,

With the growing pandemic of non communicable diseases presenting a new dimension to the challenges we face, it is imperative to devise an integrated and broader health sector response to HIV; vertical programming and donor agency driven programmes have proven largely unsustainable and of limited effect. HIV must now be seen in the context of a chronic disease; in the context of a broader multi-sectoral response, in a context free of stigma and discrimination; in essence in the context of the respect of human rights and the right to health. Sustainable health initiatives will only succeed if we are strategic from the beginning ensuring country ownership and sustainability at all times, keeping the individual at the center of the process.

I therefore renew my government's continued commitment to work towards attaining the specific deliverables for achieving the agreed targets, including Universal Access and in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

I thank you Mr. President