

**STATEMENT  
BY  
H.E EDWIN CARRINGTON SECRETARY GENERAL, CARIBBEAN  
COMMUNITY  
AT THE  
CARIBBEAN LAUNCH OF  
THE UNAIDS GLOBAL REPORT 2008  
PORT OF SPAIN  
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO  
29 JULY, 2008**

Representatives of National Governments  
Representatives of People Living with HIV and Civil Society  
Representatives of UNAIDS and its Cosponsors  
Representatives of the Diplomatic Corps  
Representatives of Development Partners  
Representatives of the Media

Dear Friends

It is indeed an honor for me to bring you greetings on behalf of the Caribbean Community and the Pan Caribbean Partnership on the occasion of this regional launch of the 2008 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic. Let us congratulate UNAIDS for its leadership role in the process and also congratulate the Caribbean Community for its valuable contribution to the production of this report on the worldwide AIDS epidemic.

After 27 years of its existence in the Caribbean, the epidemic is challenging our basic way of life: family, society, community and workplace. Many Caribbean families have lost their loved ones to AIDS; many communities have lost their leaders and their members to AIDS. In addition the persistence of stigma and discrimination against people living with AIDS is an affront to the principles of human rights. How many times has someone been denied a job because they are living with HIV?

In 2007 alone 14 000 Caribbean sons and daughters succumbed to AIDS. In that same year 20 000 people in the region were newly infected with HIV. No one knows precisely the *economic* cost of AIDS for the Caribbean where 230 000 people – 1.1% of the adult population - are living with the virus. But it is no doubt enormous. No one knows the *social* cost when a gay man in Kingston or a female sex worker in Paramaribo or a crack cocaine user in Castries or the children of a single mother living with HIV in Port-of-Spain and elsewhere are all struggling to protect their Human Rights, their right to live a dignified life, their right to be rehabilitated, their right to go to school to learn and achieve their

dreams. But these no doubt, cut deeply into the fabric of our society, resulting from the social traumas and dislocations.

Despite the somewhat gloomy picture which the data suggest, there has been substantial progress in the Caribbean. It is the only region in the world which has built a strong partnership against the epidemic. The Pan Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS (PANCAP) has led the regional response by mobilizing resources and advocating the placing of AIDS high on the national and regional agenda. Many successes have been achieved in individual countries in areas such as care and treatment and prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. However, as a region there is no certainty that we will achieve Universal Access goals if we continue to do business as usual.

Understanding that fact, PANCAP is starting a major advocacy activity in close collaboration with UNAIDS and its cosponsors. This will involve the use of available information to support countries using evidence-based research such as that which is included in this Report to implement action in a national context where Human Rights are respected and promoted, stigma and discrimination are dramatically reduced and most-at-risk populations are the priority targets of HIV prevention programs. The critical involvement of people living with HIV to help shape and spearhead the response is also a prerequisite. We cannot succeed without their full engagement and empowerment. Our experience in the Caribbean is adequate testimony to the need for building and sustaining partnership to scale-up interventions and move forward towards Universal Access targets.

Now is not the time for complacency, now is not the time for resting on our laurels. Now is the time to learn from our lessons in responding to HIV, to use data for action so that the maximum impact will be achieved with available resources.

Thank you all for your commitment and contribution in helping to build a broader and deeper response to HIV. And again congratulations to UNAIDS for its committed and creative leadership.

**H.E Edwin Carrington**  
Secretary General  
Caribbean Community