



We, leaders and representatives of organisations and people of the faith, participating in the 'Guyana National ***faith-and-hiv*** Conference' in Georgetown Guyana, on this 11<sup>th</sup> December 2008,

**Note** with concern, the impact of hiv and specifically the impact of hiv-related stigma and discrimination on families and individuals; especially on people living with and affected by hiv, populations most at risk, and those that are marginalised;

**Affirm** that we will constantly reflect on the moral, spiritual and ethical issues raised by hiv; use international standards and principles to clarify and interpret these issues in their local contexts, and offer guidance to those confronted by difficult choices at the personal, community, and programmatic levels;

**Recognise** that the values of our faith compel us to respond to hiv in all communities throughout the land. From person-to-person, family-to-family, congregation-to-congregation, and denomination-to-denomination;

**Declare** our solemn commitment to comprehensively address hiv.

## Therefore, we

**Commit** ourselves to ensure that the faith leadership, at all levels, is equipped with relevant information to help guide the reduction of hiv infections and to address hiv-related stigma and discrimination.

**Agree** not to directly or indirectly promote or condone language or actions that will cause hiv-related stigma, resulting in discrimination against people living with or affected by hiv.

**Recognise** the need to incorporate appropriate hiv information into our discourses, our rituals, our festivals, our religious education, and training of future leaders of our faith.

**Support** and abide by the national hiv prevention principles and standards as outlined in the National AIDS Strategic Plan and the national hiv guidelines, within the realm of our religious and spiritual teachings.

**Commit** to work towards overcoming hiv in an inclusive manner, and for this purpose, mobilise the human, spiritual, institutional and financial resources that our communities possess, and work closely with other organisations involved in treatment, care and support of people living with and affected by hiv.

**Dedicate** ourselves to safeguard the rights of people living with hiv and affected by hiv, and ensure their complete inclusion in religious, social, familial and economic life.

**Vow** to engage our faith communities in holding ourselves, our government, other political and non-political leaders, and other national and international actors accountable for the commitments made to provide increased resources and to work towards universal access to hiv prevention, treatment, care and support.

**Affirm** that the full realisation of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all, regardless of their hiv status, is an essential element of the faith.

**Promise** to address the vulnerabilities faced by all, especially women and marginalised populations.

**Pledge** to exhort women and their male partners to access formal healthcare, including hiv testing, in recognition of the fact that hiv is a treatable disease and hiv positive parents can have children free from hiv.

**Commit** ourselves to addressing all the vulnerabilities faced by children affected by and living with hiv, especially to ensure that their right to access education, treatment, care, and support in a loving environment is respected.

**Resolve** to advise people to protect themselves from the risk of hiv infection through unprotected sexual intercourse, contaminated blood by always using safe tested blood from authorised blood banks and never sharing injection syringes and needles.

**Undertake** to utilise our places of worship, our educational and health facilities, and our women and youth programmes, to provide the full range of prevention, treatment, care and support services.

**Coordinate** always with the Presidential AIDS Commission, the National AIDS Programme Secretariat of the Ministry of Health (NAPS), and be guided by the Guyana National AIDS Strategy framework to align our actions.

**Guarantee** to keep our promise to provide the leadership and resolve to overcome hiv and bring hope, respect, and prosperity to all Guyanese and those living within our borders;

**Declare** to work together to make the 'Guyana National Coalition on *'faith-and-hiv'* a living and unifying mechanism to address our faith-based responses to hiv, as a key component of the national response to hiv.

**Avow** that in all these commitments, we will seek strength, guidance and support from the Divine.

