

Presentation by
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Good morning, Madame MC, Mrs. Gemma Bain Thomas, Permanent Secretary, Senator the Honourable Ann David-Antoine, Minister of Health, Social Security, the Environment and Ecclesiastic Relations, Mr. Lennox Andrews, Deputy Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Finance and Planning, Reverend Osbert James, senior government officials, executives of the St. Georges University, representatives of non-governmental organizations, the private sector and the media. I am particularly pleased that I have been able to make this special visit to Grenada to lead our PAHO/WHO delegation to this most important working meeting.

Colleagues, I take this opportunity to re-affirm the commitment of the Pan American Health Organization to work with the Government and people of Grenada to realise their dreams and aspirations for a renewed and revitalized health sector. We have demonstrated this through the immediate actions taken by our staff from the Disaster Management and Caribbean Program Coordination Units from Washington and those in Barbados. To ensure that the health sector analysis is in a state of readiness to present a portfolio of investment projects at the Donor Conference 19 November 04 here in Grenada, we have taken the unprecedented steps to assemble here in Grenada a strong technical team comprising most of the technical professionals from our Caribbean Program Coordination Office in Barbados and Washington, comprising personnel in strategic planning, disaster management, mental health, media communication and project management; also a nutrition specialist from the Caribbean Food and Nutrition Institute CFNI, an epidemiologist and laboratory specialist from the Caribbean Epidemiology Centre (CAREC) as well as representatives from the Community Medicine Faculty of the University of the West Indies and from the WINREF Research and Public Health Faculties of St. Georges University, our host institution for these working meetings.

During the next two days this team of experts will work intensely with the Grenadian nationals to produce recommendations and examine proposals that will inform the future health system for Grenada. There is considerable work to be done and there is also an urgency to have the work completed efficiently and effectively and ensure that recommendations made are appropriate for Grenada. This is the reason for the selection of our team. Mrs. Veta Brown, the Caribbean Program Coordinator, who would in regular circumstances be present to coordinate the work is not with us as she and representatives from the UNDP and UNICEF, along with your Minister of Foreign Affairs and a representative from GRENCODA, are in New York attending a session of the United Nations General Assembly, presenting the Grenada Case Study of cooperation and coordination among UN Agencies and the Government.

It is widely acknowledged that health is a state of physical, mental, social, emotional and spiritual wellbeing and not merely the absence of disease. Several factors determine the status of one's health. These include the biological and genetic predisposition of the individual, the socio-economic conditions and community influences, exposures to the physical environment, and access to quality health services . Health is a strong contributor to the development of social capital – small open economiesextremely vulnerable service-oriented primary commodities...need a healthy work force and a healthy environment. Vulnerability of the developed economies were seen clearly in the SARS outbreak, Globalization demands high standards, impersonal etc.

Our tasks over the next two days is to agree on a mechanism that will result in the shortest time possible the development of a revitalized, holistic, comprehensive health system; not just the improvement in the reconstruction of health facilities; but a health system that effectively and efficiently delivers a program which is directed at resolving the conditions and circumstances that affect the health of the population of Grenada. I would encourage Grenada not merely to plan just to replace – build back what was lost but to use all the new knowledge gained, demands of demographic changes to dream differently and use these new visions to guide our planning. The things that surround us

remind us of the past and we should build on the lessons we have gained from 25 years of Primary health care and apply these here.

You will appreciate from this statement that such a program could not be accomplished simply through resources given to the Ministry of Health but must involve the concerted interactions of many government, non-government, private sector and international agencies.

Hurricane Ivan has presented us with an opportunity to review what constitutes health; define the critical problems; identify at-risk populations; develop criteria for the determination of priority actions; define the gaps in both program interventions and resources; and examine the nature and types of partnerships required to secure resources and share responsibilities for the implementation of a health and wellness program.

Grasping these opportunities will ensure that we have a renewed health system in which the individual, the family the community and all sectors of society are active participants to prevent ill health, reduce inequities, target services for vulnerable and at risks groups, and maximise the use of all available resources. Hurricane Ivan has given us an opportunity to show the world how Grenada can be a model for health service delivery, and for improving access and the quality of life for Grenadians. Here we have the example of Dominica after Hurricane David in 1979. They took the opportunity to revamp and improve the health services, developing a model comprehensive community based care . They were inspired by the vision of primary health care and Alma Ata. Significantly, Alma Ata was announced in 1977 and 78and the hurricane flowed in '79.

As we enter the 2st Century we have a new paradigm, the millennium development goals which have health as the central pivot guiding the development process.

The CARICOM Heads of Government declared in the Nassau Declaration of July 2001, “the Health of the Region is the Wealth of The Region”. In this statement they recognised the importance of the contribution of health to development. Grenada, post Ivan, must

now review its development agenda and health must be seen as a critical component of the future.

Colleagues the wellness of individuals in the comprehensive tenets of health as explained earlier, physical, social, mental and spiritual well-being is important to the productivity of the individual and the contribution that Grenadians will and could make for the rebuilding of Grenada.

The time is now for us to take action. Hence we are most pleased that so many of you have shown your commitment to this task by agreeing to participate in this two day intensive working session. I note that for reasons of planning, the sessions are scheduled to end by 4:00 pm each day. However based on the Agenda and the amount of work to be completed by the end of the second day many persons will most likely work into the evening to accomplish the tasks. Our PAHO team members are prepared for this and bring to this exercise the commitment to see the job finished.

The work during the two days will only be part of the commitment that we make, which is to produce for the Government and people of Grenada a Master Plan for Investment in Health. This process will continue after the meeting and we will continue to partner with all stakeholders to ensure that the Grenada health system is revitalized. We do not have all the financial resources but we commit to using all our technical resources and to negotiate with other partners to assist the government to mobilize the financial resources.

PAHO/WHO renewed commitment to the countries for health in the 21 Century is to ensure that we protect the health gains that we have made in the past; address the unfinished agenda and to put mechanisms in place to meet the challenges of the new and emerging diseases. The new plan for investment in health for the revitalized health system must be developed to meet these challenges. And we at PAHO remain committed to help make this a reality.

In keeping with our resolve to enhance the in-country presence of PAHO/WHO, we are ready to provide in country support to assist with the planning and give direct technical support to the Ministry of Health as you take accelerated action to coordinate the process for the development of the revitalized health system

Please accept my thanks for accepting the PAHO/WHO partnership and I look forward to a most successful working meeting.