



Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

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Speech

**Speech to the 5th Annual General Meeting of the Pan Caribbean
Partnership Against HIV/AIDS**

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by Dr Peter Piot

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Prime Minister Douglas, your Excellencies, distinguished guests, dear friends,
First, let me congratulate James Moss-Solomon for the launch of the Caribbean Business Coalition against AIDS.

In 2001 in Barbados, I had the great privilege of launching the regional partnership that is PANCAP with Prime Ministers Douglas and (Owen) Arthur, Yolanda Simon of CRN+, Eddie Greene of CARICOM and Sir George Alleyne who is today our Special Envoy on HIV/AIDS for the Caribbean.

In the span of just these few years, the Pan-Caribbean Partnership against HIV/AIDS has become the prime platform on AIDS in the Caribbean – this has been possible because PANCAP has been hosted by CARICOM, and so has the great benefit of political backing at the highest levels.

PANCAP has made major advances in these years on several fronts, including political and social mobilization, shared planning and development of a regional response, and financial mobilization, with more than \$500 million in international funding committed to the Caribbean today.

The challenge now is to make the money work – a challenge that I know PANCAP is already engaged with.

Making the money work for people – in other words, large-scale implementation of comprehensive HIV programmes – is a challenge that is not unique to the Caribbean. It is a challenge for every region and every country, as well as for bi-lateral donors and multilateral organizations in their support of national efforts, because we're entering a new phase, the phase of implementation.

Making the money work is as much about the 'what' as about the 'how'.

The 'what' is clear – comprehensive programmes that include HIV prevention, treatment, care and support. The efforts have to be absolutely comprehensive because the truth is that anything with 'only' attached to it doesn't work for tackling AIDS – such as HIV treatment only, or HIV prevention only, or abstinence only, or condoms only, or testing only, or circumcision only. And the other lesson on 'what' is that even the best designed and funded efforts on AIDS will not make headway without tackling stigma, homophobia, poverty, all of which are the best friends of HIV.

The 'how' is what we're struggling with, and here we have a long way to go. This shouldn't surprise us as our task is formidable and complex, indeed unprecedented. Here leadership, human and institutional capacity, good management, accountability, ownership and better coordination are the keywords. I hope that our discussions tomorrow will focus on these old and new problems and how to overcome them.

The process of making the money work can be accelerated by addressing the limitations on technical and institutional capacity, as well as broadening the AIDS response beyond the health sector to include education and justice, among others – and I am sure that PANCAP will be addressing these issues.

I hope also that PANCAP and CARICOM will use their political leverage to remove bottlenecks in procurement and resource flows to countries.

Making the money work is important in its own right – but its true importance is as a means to the goal of achieving universal access to HIV prevention, treatment and support – this is the goal on which we must fix our sights as otherwise this epidemic will continue to decimate generation after generation.

The goal of universal access to comprehensive HIV programmes has won wide backing since I called for it at the UN General Assembly in June, beginning with the G8 Gleneagles Summit in July and then the World Summit last month in New York.

PANCAP/CARICOM, in collaboration with its regional member organizations and the UN system, is ideally placed to develop a road-map for achieving universal access in the Caribbean region, identifying region-specific challenges and supporting countries in target-setting and plans.

And given the strength of stigma and discrimination relating to AIDS in this region, it is of course vital that this road-map show how to confront these barriers, especially discrimination relating to homosexuality and people living with HIV. As we all know, human rights are not an optional extra in the AIDS response – they form the very core of an effective response.

Building on its ‘Champions for Change’ campaign, PANCAP can advocate forcefully for policy and legal changes to combat stigma and protect human rights, as well as for the full and equal participation of people living with HIV and of all vulnerable groups at every level of the response.

If we do not combat stigma and discrimination now, our ability to make progress towards universal access to HIV prevention, treatment or support will forever be undermined – regardless of how much money we may have.

And I hope that PANCAP will continue to ensure that the Caribbean region’s views and experiences are articulated in the global arena, such as in the high-level UN General Assembly meeting next year to review progress towards the goals of the Declaration of Commitment on AIDS, as well as in the Global Fund Board and the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Board.

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The AIDS situation in the Caribbean is urgent, and the challenges to mounting an effective response are enormous. But we must not lose this historic opportunity to use the financing now available. So the years ahead will continue to be challenging ones for PANCAP.

But given the strength of political backing for PANCAP, it is certain that it will meet these challenges and fulfill the high expectations raised when it was created in 2001. Prime Minister Douglas has a great opportunity next year – at the high-level UN General Assembly meeting to review progress towards the commitments made five years ago at the Special Session on AIDS – to put the Caribbean on the global map, this time with results. So I hope all countries in the region will report on their progress. This is crucial for continuing to mobilize resources.

You can count on the solidarity of UNAIDS and the entire UN system in all your efforts in tackling AIDS in the Caribbean.

Thank you and Happy Diwali!