

Remarks Delivered By Dr. The Honourable Jerome Walcott, Minister Of Health.

On The Occasion Of The Signing Ceremony To Launch The Chronic Non-Communicable Disease Registry, On Friday, August 3, 2007, At The Office Of Caribbean Program Coordination Of The Pan American Health Organization, Dayrells Road, St. Michael, At 10:00 A.M.

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Madame Chairperson, Mrs. Antoinette Williams; Professor Hilary Beckles, Dr. Ronald Knight, Mr. Amos Tincani, Dr. Gina Watson, Professor Trevor Hassell, Mr. Horace Cobham, Mr. Winston Collymore, Colleagues, Members of the Media:

Today marks a significant occasion for the Ministry of Health and the health sector in Barbados with the signing of this agreement to officially inaugurate the CNCD Registry. It is significant because the registry is the first of its kind in the Eastern Caribbean and there is known to be only about 15-20 well established registries of this kind in the world today. In essence, Barbados is charting a new course for the management of CNCDs in the Caribbean and possibly in the Americas Region.

By documenting the incidence, natural history and outcomes of cases of CNCDs we will be able to more effectively plan policies and programmes based on evidence. For too long there has been concern about the lack of sufficient data and information to guide financial, human resource and social policies.

The conditions which will comprise the core of the work and the output of the registry, namely: cardiovascular disease, stroke and cancer are 3 of the 5 leading causes of sickness and mortality among adult Barbadians. I am certain that all of us are well aware of the huge financial and social burden associated with the management of these and other CNCDs. Among these, public expenditure on drugs, the cost of hospitalisation, loss of productivity and the disruption of family life are major concerns.

The establishment of this registry is but another addition to the arsenal in the fight against the CNCDs. For sometime the Ministry has been making diligent efforts to put in place a comprehensive and systematic approach to the management of these diseases. Starting in 2004 a policy paper on the prevention and control of CNCD was developed and approved by the Cabinet in February 2005. In that same year, with assistance from PAHO and other partners, the Ministry convened an International Consultation on the Development of a Strategy for the Prevention and Control of CNCDs. The consultation brought together national, regional and international health

professionals and policy makers who thoroughly ventilated this issue.

Among the recommendations were the need for the improvement in the evidence base for planning; the establishment of a post of Senior Medical Officer of Health, with responsibility for CNCDs; strengthening of health promotion capacity and the establishment of a National Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases Commission.

I am pleased to report, that as of today, with the inauguration of the registry that all of these measures are now in place.

To further strengthen the evidence base for action on CNCDs, the Ministry of Health and the Barbados Statistical Service (BSS) are currently conducting a Behavioural Risk Factor Survey which will investigate lifestyle habits including diet, physical activity, smoking and other health seeking behaviours among a sample of the population. Through this key alliance with the BSS, it is anticipated that such data will be collected on a continuous basis.

The findings of this risk factor survey, together with the output of the CNCD Registry will help to provide a more complete picture of the CNCD situation, its effects on the population and the barriers which limit a positive response to the many behavioural interventions that have been implemented over the years. In the medium to long term these findings will guide the work of the National CNCD Commission.

I am especially pleased that on this occasion, the Ministry of Health has sought to form a strategic partnership with the Chronic Disease Research Centre of the University of the West Indies to establish the registry. A major undertaking such as this was made all the more feasible through the commitment and willingness of the UWI and the CDRC in particular. Over the years of its existence, the CDRC has demonstrated that it has the expertise and international recognition to execute such programmes. One only has to recall the Barbados Stroke Register as but one recent example of the Centre's work and demonstration of its capabilities. I would like to express my gratitude to Professor Beckles and Dr. Hennis for their willingness to collaborate with the Ministry of Health to ensure that the management of CNCD in Barbados is carried out in accordance with internationally established standards and will come to be viewed a best practice model for small developing states.

In this age when governmental institutions are called on to provide more and more sophisticated services to the population, with limited resources, outsourcing of specific tasks to reputable and distinguished organisations will go a long way to provide such services that are deemed necessary.

I will hasten to add that outsourcing of services with sound service level agreements will be an option for many health sector projects and programmes in the future. The Ministry of Health has already entered into such an agreement with the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Barbados for the provision of cardiac rehabilitation services to persons requiring such, especially those who would otherwise be unable to afford such services.

Let me also take this opportunity to thank the European Development Fund which is providing much of the technical expertise and resources to see this initiative to fruition. Through this programme, The Government of Barbados has access to Bds\$25 million in general budget support for the Ministry of Health. This package will allow the Ministry of Health to adopt a vast array of strategies identified in the Barbados Strategic Plan for Health 2002-2012, which was reviewed only last month

at a National Policy Review Forum. The EDF Programme will also ensure the fulfilment of priority areas established under the Caribbean Cooperation for Health Initiative Phase III.

The Ministry of Health will continue to work with all national, regional and international partners to support the advancement of healthcare delivery in Barbados and to ensure equity and access to quality healthcare services for all Barbadians.

I thank you.