



For further information contact:

Rob Graham, KFF, (650) 854-9400, rgraham@kff.org
Allyson Leacock, CBC, (246) 463-9862 or aleacock@cbcbarbados.bb
Patrick Cozier, CBU, (246) 430-1017 or patrick.cozier@caribsurf.com

Top Caribbean Broadcast Leaders Commit Resources to Addressing HIV/AIDS in the Region

Caribbean Broadcast Media Partnership on HIV/AIDS Launched

Bridgetown, Barbados – More than 30 television and radio executives, representing 20 countries, announced today the establishment of the first Caribbean Broadcast Media Partnership on HIV/AIDS. Coming out of a three-day Caribbean Broadcast Media Leaders Summit on HIV/AIDS, the new Partnership seeks to promote collaboration and leverage resources among media in the region with the goal of extending the reach and effectiveness of HIV/AIDS messaging. The meeting was co-organized by the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation (CBC), the Caribbean Broadcasting Union (CBU), and the Kaiser Family Foundation, a U.S.-based non-profit, private operating foundation focusing on health issues.

Recognizing their unique power as broadcasters to inform about HIV/AIDS and reduce stigma, participating executives signed a Summit Declaration, committing to the following:

- Making HIV/AIDS a business priority;
- Integrating HIV/AIDS communication across program genres;
- Providing for dedicated and substantial broadcast time to HIV/AIDS programming;
- Seeking co-production opportunities to extend the reach of HIV/AIDS messages.

The Partnership, in concert with the Kaiser Family Foundation and other funders, will move to develop a series of concrete initiatives, including original news and entertainment programming, public service announcements and technical training for journalists and producers of program and editorial content.

More information about the Summit and resulting Partnership, including a list of participating media companies and the declaration of commitment, are posted online at www.broadcasthivcarib.org. The website will serve as an ongoing resource for media to share content and information about HIV/AIDS.

“This meeting has signaled an ideal opportunity to put the Caribbean Single Market (CSM) in action as regional broadcasters. As developing nations, we need to use our collective energies and communication channels to remind our citizens that this is a

pandemic with tentacles that affect our economies, our social development agenda and future generations. We cannot judge, we need to act and CBC is fully committed,” said Dr. Allyson Leacock, General Manager of the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation. In conjunction with this week’s Summit, the CBC has strengthened HIV/AIDS content across its regular programming, including public service announcements and special HIV-themed editions of *The People’s Business* and *Chat Room*.

“By leveraging their power to inform and influence, Caribbean broadcast systems are making a powerful statement of their commitment to the fight against HIV/AIDS, we extend an invitation to all Caribbean individual and corporate citizens to join us in this crusade,” said Mr. Patrick Cozier, Secretary General of the Caribbean Broadcasting Union.

The Summit and resulting Caribbean Broadcast Media Partnership on HIV/AIDS respond to the goals set forth in the Global Media AIDS Initiative (GMAI), a call-to-action made by U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan for the world’s media leaders to contribute their vast communications resources to addressing HIV/AIDS.

“This historic Summit is the first step toward concrete action to help motivate social change and deliver life-saving information to young people,” said Dr. Drew E. Altman, President and CEO of the Kaiser Family Foundation, which was a founding member of the GMAI.

In addition to Dr. Altman, others joining the media executives at this week’s Summit were prominent leaders in the fight against HIV/AIDS, including Sir George Alleyne, the U.N. Secretary General’s Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Latin America and the Caribbean; Dr. Carol Jacobs, Chair, Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria and Chair, National HIV/AIDS Commission of Barbados; and Dr. Donna Shalala, President, University of Miami, former Secretary of U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, and trustee of the Kaiser Family Foundation.

Participating media executives established a Steering Committee to lead the Partnership. The Committee will be chaired by Dr. Allyson Leacock, who hosted this week’s meeting, and will include representative membership from a variety of countries and media houses across the Caribbean, with support from the Caribbean Broadcasting Union. The Kaiser Family Foundation – which is supporting similar efforts in Russia, India, southern Africa and the United States – will provide ongoing technical assistance and help to identify resources to support the development of regional program content and informational products on HIV/AIDS.

In addition, the Kaiser Family Foundation, in partnership with the Pan-American Health Organization (PAHO), announced that it would bring six Caribbean journalists to the XVI International AIDS Conference, to be held this August in Toronto, for training workshops and to support coverage out of this major international conference.

In conjunction with this week’s Summit, the National HIV/AIDS Commission of

Barbados and the Ministry of Health of Barbados, in partnership with the CBC, organized a National HIV Testing Day in downtown Bridgetown on Tuesday, May 9. The CBC and Starcom contributed air-time in the week leading up to the event to promote the availability of free testing. More than 1,000 people were tested. Summit executives attended the National Testing Day event to learn how they might replicate similar activities in their countries.

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HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean

HIV/AIDS represents a formidable economic and social challenge in the Caribbean. The Joint United National Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) reports that the Caribbean has the second highest prevalence rate in the world, after sub-Saharan Africa. AIDS is the leading cause of death among adults in the region aged 15-44 and the epidemic is increasingly female with new HIV infections among women exceeding those among men in the Caribbean. Young women are especially vulnerable, as some country-level studies within the region have found infection rates among young women 2 to 6 times higher than their male counterparts. For more information about HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean and the world visit www.globalhealthfacts.org.

About the Caribbean Broadcasting Union

The Caribbean Broadcasting Union (CBU) represents both public and private broadcast systems in the English, French, Spanish and Dutch speaking Caribbean. The objective of CBU is to promote the interest of broadcasting among members through: (1) development and execution of broadcasting projects and programmes relevant to the social, economic, and cultural well-being of Caribbean countries; (2) professional training; (3) promotion of professional standards and ethics; (4) development of collaborative partnerships among members; (5) collection and dissemination of information among members; and (6) promotion of regional awareness and integration. For more information, visit the CBC online at www.caribunion.com.

About the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation

The Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) is a leading state-owned media organization operating for the past 43 years in Barbados. The CBC operates 3 radio stations (98.1FM The One, 100.7FM Quality; and 900AM / 94.7FM Caribbean's Best Connection); one free-to-air television station (CBC Channel 8); one subscription television service (MultiChoice TV); and, a web portal (www.cbc.bb). The CBC's programming represents a mix of international and 80% local and regional content. Current affairs and news programming includes *Mornin' Barbados*, *Chat Room*, *Head On*, *Line & Length*, *Another Accent*, *Book Talk*, and *The People's Business*. The CBC is

poised to embrace the challenges of operating in a multi-platform.

About the Kaiser Family Foundation

The Kaiser Family Foundation is a U.S.-based non-profit, private operating foundation dedicated to providing information and analysis on health issues to policymakers, the media, and the general public. It is not associated with Kaiser Permanente or Kaiser Industries. Information on HIV/AIDS and Kaiser's public education partnerships with entertainment media is available at www.kff.org. A daily news summary report on developments in HIV/AIDS is available on www.kaisernetwork.org, Kaiser's free health information service. Kaiser also operates www.globalhealthfacts.org and www.globalhealthreporting.org, where the latest information on HIV/AIDS, TB, and malaria can be found.

About the Global Media AIDS Initiative

The *Global Media AIDS Initiative* was launched in January 2004 at a special meeting at U.N. headquarters of some of the world's top media executives organized by the Kaiser Family Foundation and UNAIDS. It seeks to mobilize the world's leading media companies to contribute their resources and expertise to respond to the growing HIV/AIDS pandemic. Other national and regional meetings of media executives have been organized around the world by the Kaiser Family Foundation and local partners, including in Johannesburg (Africa Media Leaders Summit on HIV/AIDS, October 2005); San Francisco (Public Broadcasters Global Media Leaders Summit on HIV/AIDS, May 2005); Delhi (India Media Leaders Summit on HIV/AIDS, January 2005); and Moscow (Eurasia Media Leaders Summit on HIV/AIDS, October 2004). In Russia, India, Africa and the United States, resulting partnerships with top national and regional media have led to major new HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness campaigns.

