

**Keynote remarks by Dr. Donna E. Shalala,
President, University of Miami & Trustee, Kaiser Family Foundation**

As a member of the Board of Trustees of the Kaiser Family Foundation, and as President of a University very involved in and close to Caribbean affairs, I'd like to extend a thank you to Kaiser's partners in organizing this summit – the Caribbean Broadcasting Union, represented here today by Patrick Cozier and Vic Fernandes, and the Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation, represented by Allyson Leacock. I would especially like to thank all of you for taking the time out of your busy schedules to participate in this important meeting.

The HIV/AIDS Pandemic

Next month marks 25 years since the first known case of AIDS was detected. Sadly, a quarter century later, the epidemic continues to outperform and outpace our response. No region of the world is immune from this surging epidemic. So-called “next wave” countries, like India and Russia, are confronting emerging epidemics, and Africa and the Caribbean continue to struggle with some of the highest rates of infection in the world.

Yet, statistics mask the true devastation and human suffering caused by HIV/AIDS. As HHS secretary under President Clinton during the 1990s, I saw first-hand what HIV/AIDS does to countries and families. And, I was dismayed to witness the growing HIV burden at home, especially the enormous ethnic and racial disparities in HIV infections and AIDS death rates.

During my time in government, AIDS was among my central priorities, and I am particularly proud of the dramatic expansions in HIV-related funding for prevention services, treatment, and research initiatives – both at home and abroad – during the 1990s.

Despite our best efforts, however, we've not been able to turn the tide of this epidemic. This audience understands this reality as well as any other. As you heard discussed this afternoon, AIDS has become the leading cause of death in the Caribbean among adults aged 15-44. The lives of our friends, neighbors, and children are at stake.

As President of the University of Miami, I am proud to lead an institution that is dedicated to improving healthcare conditions for poverty-stricken communities in the Caribbean. Since becoming President, I have twice traveled to Haiti, where our Leonard M. Miller School of Medicine has established a primary care health clinic in the poor, rural region of Thomonde. Together with Project Medishare, the University of Miami provides training to local doctors, nurses, and community health workers to specifically address the needs of rural Haiti. We also sponsor a team of university volunteers who travel together with local caregivers into

Haiti's rural communities and deliver direct observed therapy for tuberculosis, while also educating families about HIV and TB.

Through this program, we've been able to substantially improve prenatal care, vaccines, and adherence to HIV and TB treatment in the communities where we work. And, we've been able to educate people about how to prevent HIV infection and care for loved ones who may already have the disease.

This is important and necessary work, and hopefully we are establishing important models, but the ability of one clinic or one team of doctors will never compare to the power of your media outlets to reach audiences in their living rooms or on their radios every day with repeated information and messaging. The media has the power to do what most of us can only dream of – reach millions of people every day with lifesaving information about HIV/AIDS and how to prevent infection.

Breaking the silence and the role of the media

Lack of knowledge and information, as well as stigma and discrimination, allow HIV/AIDS to spread. These are areas in which you, the media – with your vast communications and creative resources and powerful reach – can make a huge difference.

Media is in the business of breaking silence. Not only are you in a position to deliver life-saving information, but you can also create a more open environment in which these issues can be discussed and reduce the stigma that directly leads to its spread. Reputable studies show that a strong, global commitment to expanded prevention and public education programs -- started now -- could avert 28 million new HIV infections between 2005 and 2015. This figure is more than half of the new infections that might otherwise occur during that period. Do these studies sound optimistic? I'd gladly settle for half that number – 14 million lives saved!

We know that media isn't the only answer, but it is a critical part of the answer – working with government, and stepping in and leading where government isn't doing enough. At Kaiser, we have both a special commitment to, and special expertise in, working with the media. Indeed, through Kaiser network, we are part "new media" organization ourselves. And, we know we need to be working with media in the Caribbean. That's why we are here.

The need for new approaches

In 2004, media executives from around the world gathered at the United Nations Headquarters for a meeting organized by UNAIDS and the Kaiser Family Foundation to discuss their role in addressing the global AIDS crisis. Coming out of the meeting, Secretary General Kofi Annan established the *Global Media AIDS*

Initiative and called upon the world's media leaders to use their resources to fight the spread of HIV/AIDS.

The resulting global movement that this initiative has helped to stir has resulted in new and renewed levels of engagement by media around the world. Most have begun with summits of Media Executives -- similar to the one taking place here over the next few days -- in Moscow and Delhi and Johannesburg -- which in every case led to major initiatives and significant expansions in media commitment to HIV/AIDS.

I'm very pleased to see Bridgetown, Barbados added to this list. And, I'm especially eager to see how this meeting can help build upon some of the pioneering work that has already been done in this region. You should be proud to be leading the way for other media around the world.

What you can do

At the core of our discussions over the next few days is engaging you -- the media -- more directly in the fight. I know that you have done much already -- and I congratulate and applaud you for that work -- but we need to do more. We cannot now become complacent.

Misinformation, denial, and stigma continue to claim lives. According to a recent study, more than 90% of adolescents in Haiti believe they have a tiny or non-existent risk of contracting HIV, despite the reality that the nation has one of the highest rates of HIV prevalence outside Sub-Saharan Africa. Equally obstructive have been popular assumptions that AIDS is a disease of "other" people. Many say, "If I'm not a gay man, a sex worker or a drug user, I'm simply not at risk." Of course, we know that's just not the case.

The key is finding a way to personalize risk, and educating, especially younger people, about what they can do to prevent HIV infection and make it part of their every-day thinking. HIV/AIDS needs to be a core business priority, embedded across all your platforms.

Television and radio broadcast media have a pivotal role to play in this personalization of HIV/AIDS. In many countries, including my own, people identify television and radio as their primary source of information about HIV/AIDS -- more so than even their doctors, friends or family. Entertainment platforms -- as much, perhaps even more so, than news -- can be a powerful means of educating audiences, especially young ones. You will hear more over the next two days about examples of how HIV-themes have been incorporated into storylines, and not only served the public interest but also done well in the ratings. As our President, Drew Altman, will tell us tomorrow, we believe that if you do this, you will increase -- *not* decrease -- viewers and listeners. This is why

we believe making HIV/AIDS a part of your business plan is both the right thing and the smart thing to do.

And just as important – and here I speak from personal experience – major media efforts can also change political environments and spur governments to greater action, even if that is only a by-product of your campaigns. We have seen this in Russia, India, South Africa, and even the U.S. Tomorrow, we'll hear more about different approaches media companies are doing here and around the world are contributing to the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Call to action

We came to this summit not just to learn from others, but more importantly, with the goal of creating a new partnership among broadcasters in this region to scale up a joint response to HIV/AIDS and to leverage individual commitments to have a greater impact. I hope that this summit will result in a substantive and concrete commitment to regional collaboration among broadcasters across the Caribbean to develop innovative, new initiatives that will raise awareness and help prevent the spread of this disease.

You are the decision-makers and smartest media minds from across the Caribbean. Let's find a way to make a real difference. A goal for this meeting is to put together a plan for a coordinated and sustainable media partnership to fight AIDS in the Caribbean.

I believe we can do this.