

Madam Ban Soon-taek,
Madam Woizero Azeb Mesfin,
Mr. Michel Sidibé,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Every child has the right to survival and we have to safeguard this right also for babies born from mothers infected with HIV.

To fulfill our moral obligation in ensuring universal access to treatment, Suriname joined the *Regional Initiative for Elimination of Mother to Child Transmission of HIV and Congenital Syphilis in Latin America and the Caribbean* in 2009. In Suriname, this initiative was expanded by including the prevention of transmission of Hepatitis B.

The Program for Prevention of Mother To Child Transmission in my country is integrated in the primary health care and the National Mother and Child Health Program. This integrated approach results in less fragmentation and stigmatization, and leads to a more effective way towards achieving the MDG's related to women's and children's health.

Our Prevention of Mother To Child Transmission Program is free of charge and includes:

- HIV testing for all pregnant women and their partners
- Availability of anti-retroviral therapy drugs
- Testing of babies of HIV positive women, by 4 weeks of age
- Provision of infant formula for HIV positive women
- Psychological and Social support
- Partner counseling
- Counseling for family planning.

So far, there has been a significant increase of pregnant women being tested on HIV: from 30% in 2003 to 88% currently. As a result, the success rate of babies born free of HIV is also showing an increase.

With regard to the Prevention of Mother To Child Transmission of HIV in Suriname, we have to deal with several challenges, such as:

- Accessibility to the interior
- Harmful traditions and customs, misconceptions and adverse beliefs
- Language barriers in a multi-lingual society
- Socio-economic inequalities

To reach the target of elimination of transmission of HIV from mother to child by 2015, we have to ensure that we keep all women in the program. We should also deal with issues of stigmatization and discrimination, as well as poverty and gender inequalities, while trying to improve partner involvement.

It is, further, necessary to improve access to medical-, psychological and social support services for **all** women. Eventually, these actions will not only result in the elimination of the transmission of HIV from mother to child, but also lower the mortality of mothers as well as infant mortality in Suriname.

Our global partnership for elimination of Mother To Child Transmission of HIV and congenital syphilis will further strengthen national efforts, and build regional and national capacity.

Finally, I would like to thank UN-AIDS for organizing the First Spouses Event. An occasion like this provides us with the opportunity to share our best practices and reinforces our commitment to protect future generations.

Thank you.