Message of the Minister for Health for World AIDS Day 2017

Three decades after HIV was first detected in Seychelles, the world continues to recognise our country for the remarkable progress we have made in keeping the prevalence of HIV infection relatively low in the general population, in providing free antiretroviral treatment to all our people who need it and in arresting “mother-to-child-transmission” of HIV infection.

We are mindful, however, that not everything is perfect. Challenges such as AIDS-related mortality, new HIV infections, HIV and Hepatitis C co-infections in people who inject drugs and men-who-have-sex-with-men, need far better approaches to reverse the trend.

These are some of the pockets of unmet needs that we need to squarely confront. For these reasons, more and more, our programmes are visibly penetrating deeper and deeper into the communities, to reach out to where the challenges are and to address the needs where they are.

We are increasing the quantity, quality and frequency of health services for the prison population. We are reviewing the programmes that exist for the LGBTQ community and for sex workers. We are promoting the “health throughout the life course approach” and, through persistent, purposive and smarter strategies that are known to have worked wherever they have been applied, we are dismantling the taboos that prevent people who need care from exercising their right to health.

We understand, absolutely, that the right to health must be consolidated on the premise of equity, giving everybody a fair opportunity to promote, protect and restore their own health, without any prejudice.

On the occasion of World AIDS Day this year, we are all set to further consolidate these principles. We are making sure that we keep abreast of all developments in the science of HIV and AIDS worldwide and that we follow all the new facets of the management of this epidemic.

At the population level, we are preparing to develop our new HIV and AIDS strategic plan – a plan that will correspond better to the nationwide approach that is needed today, given the challenges that we face now.

At the individual level, we are seriously considering the introduction of novelties such as the fixed-dose pills that combine three anti-HIV drugs in one tablet, as an exciting development that will allow many of our fellow
citizens with HIV and AIDS to take their treatment in one pill, once a day. This will ultimately increase adherence to treatment. Non-adherence remains an important challenge in Seychelles and contributes significantly to the persistence of the epidemic in our country.

Furthermore, we are going to train more health workers in the proper management of the epidemic. We will contribute more towards the empowerment of committed non-government organizations to address the prevention, treatment and care needs of today, building on the successes of yesterday and dealing with the pitfalls of always.

Our health care system is considered to be exceptionally people-centred. It is solidly structured around the needs of our people. Therefore, because our people have a significant say in how health programmes are planned, implemented and evaluated, their right to health, is very much in their own hands and in their own voices.

Seychelles has been classified among the top 40 countries in the World with the highest likelihood of achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

These accolades are the result of our unyielding belief in the fundamental rights of our people. We will continue to uphold those rights for everyone, especially the right to health, as we further consolidate accountability, transparency and good governance in the management of the HIV and AIDS epidemic in our country.