

**George A. O. Alleyne**  
**Director, PAHO ·**  
**14 February 2001**

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**REPLY ON THE CONFERMENT OF THE ORDER OF THE CARIBBEAN  
COMMUNITY  
(Bridgetown, Barbados)\*\***

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Your Excellency Sir Clifford Husbands, Governor General of Barbados and Lady Husbands, Right Honorable Owen Arthur, Prime Minister of Barbados, Heads of Government, Secretary General of CARICOM, Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

My first duty and pleasure is to thank the Conference for this preferment. It is a very special pleasure to receive it here in Barbados and a double pleasure to receive it from you, Mr. Prime Minister. You honor me and my family by having conferred on me this distinction. I am moved, and my strongest emotion now is one of gratitude to my family and to the many persons who have helped me to be what I am and to do what I have done.

I am a proud product of the physical and social environment that began to have its effect on me from the day I was born here in St. Philip. I can recognize that my development has been rooted in this place, and I like to think that in the positions I have held and the countries I have worked, I have made it patent that as the Mighty Gabby has said "my navel string is buried right here." I have always opted to be where I could be influenced by and perhaps influence in some small way, the events that occur here. I chose to attend the University of the West Indies because I wished to be part of the grandest educational experiment that our region was to see—a choice that has been all the more happy because it brought me my wife.

Over the course of these years, nothing has occurred to dim my hopes and aspirations for our Caribbean countries. I continue to have faith that we can overcome in the struggle for our place in the sun—a struggle that seems to have a peculiar sharpness in the case of our small states. I have learnt that this struggle takes place in a world that at the best can be said to have nothing against us, but at the same time has nothing for us.

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\* **Pan American Health Organization, Pan American Sanitary Bureau, Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization.**

\*\* **Presented at Opening Ceremony of the Twelfth Inter-Sessional Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community. Bridgetown, Barbados, 14 February 2001.**

As the Mighty Sparrow would say, it is by the sweat of our own brows that we shall eat bread. In the time of many of our forefathers, that sweat was the result of the physical exertion that came from the digging and hewing and fetching that was their lot-- but no longer. In this world of today, the cause of that sweat is different. The sweat on our brows must now come from the mental concentration and application that are necessary for acquiring of the knowledge that we need-- knowledge of how to make our human and social capital the engines of our development. Silver and gold have we none, and therefore we must accept no limit to the creativity and talents that can derive from these forms of capital. There is one aspect of human capital about which I know something and whose formation has been my life's work. That is health. It is not purblind disciplinary parochialism that makes me say, with acknowledgement to Adam Smith, that "the health of nations is the wealth of nations."

Good health is a good in its own right, but we know now with certainty that it is also instrumental for the other aspects of our human development. For me and many like me, this quest for attention to the health of our people has been, and continues to be, a magnificent obsession. Mr. Prime Minister, I wish to think that this honor you have conferred on me this evening is an indication that this obsession is shared at the highest levels of the Caribbean governments.

I thank you again, and hope that I can continue to make some small contribution to our development.