

**ELEVENTH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
GRENADA DRUG EPIDEMIOLOGY NETWORK AND
NATIONAL OBSERVATORY ON DRUGS (GRENDEN-NOD)**

**FEATURE ADDRESS BY
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&
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Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, I wish to welcome you to the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the Grenada Drug Epidemiology Network and National Observatory on Drugs (GRENDEN-NOD). I am indeed delighted that you have accepted our invitation to be part of this Meeting.

The Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development extends congratulations to GRENDEN, for convening this meeting which marks the thirteenth anniversary of GRENDEN. This is a significant accomplishment, both for Grenada and the Caribbean. It demonstrates that Grenada has successfully developed a sustainable and functional framework for the collection and analysis of drug-related data, which has facilitated the development of evidenced-based policies and programs.

I also wish to welcome our distinguished guest Dr. Omowale Amuler-Marshall, Professor at St. George's University and Chair of the National Committee on Non-Communicable Diseases.

This Meeting is a historic one, as we also have with us Mr. Pernell Clarke, Research Specialist and Ms. Tiffany Barry, Project Coordinator from the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), in Washington D.C, other Distinguished Officials from some Caribbean countries, along with the Principal and Alternate Focal Points of GRENDEN, as well as Senior Managers of the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development. Our colleagues from the CICAD and the region are here as part of a regional meeting of the Caribbean Drug Information Networks (DIN). We are pleased that you have joined us today for this Meeting.

The theme for this meeting, '**Substance Abuse: A Public Health Problem, in Grenada**', supports the concept that substance use is a public health issue. Matters pertaining to addiction, treatment, and incarceration, impact significantly on the economy of our country. Government spends a significant amount of money each year to provide medical care and services to patients who encounter medical problems associated with drug consumption. This is further compounded by the large sums required for law enforcement.

In this regard, I am pleased that the St. George's University is working with the Drug Control Secretariat on a research study on the economic costs of drug treatment and incarceration.

This is one of the areas that the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD) has identified as an Indicator, for the Caribbean to collect data. I wish to thank Dr. Cecilia Younger, Professor at St. George's University, who is leading the research on this subject, in Grenada.

During the past year, GRENDEN has strengthened its capacity to collect data from the relevant Ministries, through the appointment of Alternate Focal Points. As a result, GRENDEN now has a Focal and Alternate Focal Points in these Ministries to assist in the collection of data for the twelve (12) Indicators which it uses as a tool to analyse relevant data.

At the Sixth Thematic Review Meeting of GRENDEN, held in January 2015, seventeen (17) areas were identified as possible new data sources and the formulation of GRENDEN Indicators. I have been advised that substantial progress was made by the Drug Control Secretariat in its examination of these data sources, to determine whether they can serve as feasible sources.

These areas include: aliens deported from Grenada for drug-related offences, linkage between drug use and domestic violence, drug-related mortality, Money Laundering schemes, emergence of new drugs/trends, such as e-cigarettes (importation, etc) and a population survey on the prevalence of drugs. It is envisioned that once this examination on the feasibility of these data sources is completed, new Indicators would be formulated, and thereafter data collection would commence.

Significant progress has also been made in the use of the Standard Drug Treatment Registration Form. This form was developed by CICAD, and is currently being used by several Caribbean countries.

It is expected that the use of the new Registration Form would assist Grenada in the following areas:

- i. Identifying patterns of drug use.
- ii. Indicator of drug trends (an early warning system).
- iii. Management purposes.
- iv. Advocacy and policy.
- v. Identification of patterns of service utilization.
- vi. Service evaluation.

Staff at the Carlton House Treatment Centre and the Rathdune Psychiatric Unit are using this Form. The Drug Control Secretariat intends to fully replace its present Indicators on admissions to these facilities, with the new registration Form in 2017.

The Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development notes that CICAD has proposed a set of eighteen standardized Indicators, in the areas of drug demand and supply reduction. These Indicators are to be used by the Drug Information Networks (DIN) in the Caribbean.

As noted by CICAD, “The development of indicators is an important step in the development of a DIN and they are used to guide the systematic collection of data on various aspects of the drug problem in a country. Building networks and creating appropriate institutional structures is necessary to have the required mechanism to support the collection of these indicators”.

Ladies and gentlemen, I am pleased to announce that GRENDEN is already implementing thirteen (13) of these eighteen (18) Indicators. Some challenges exist with the Indicators on drug-related mortality and morbidity, and the prevalence, and incidence of drug use in the general population. However, some measures are being examined to adequately address these challenges. The Government is proud that GRENDEN’s Indicators are already in sync with most of the Indicators proposed by CICAD.

Ladies and gentlemen, we at the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, are indeed proud of GRENDEN and its accomplishments, since 2002.

These accomplishments have strengthened the capacity of Grenada, to respond effectively to the drug phenomenon, both at home and abroad. GRENDEN has enabled Grenada to collect, analyze, and disseminate information on drugs, and related information, for the purpose of monitoring trends, developing policy, and implementing appropriate programmes and responses.

As GRENDEN prepares for 2016, I wish to challenge you to give consideration to the development of new Indicators to collect additional data on alcohol consumption.

As you are aware, the Government of Grenada is currently preparing the Draft National Policy on Alcohol. This Policy, outlines a series of measures the Government intends to implement, to reduce alcohol consumption and related consequences. Indeed, the consumption of alcohol is a major public health problem in Grenada. According to the World Health Organization (WHO) Global Status Report on Alcohol and Health 2014, Grenada's total adult per capita consumption of alcohol is 12.5 liters annually, compared to an average of 6.2 liters worldwide and 8.4 in the Americas.

The Grenada Drug Epidemiology Network (GRENDEN), through its several statistical publications has confirmed that consumption is excessive and there is a growing trend of increased consumption among young females. Some of the laws and regulations regarding sale, distribution and consumption are outdated and do not address current realities, and there is disregard in some areas for these laws and regulations. It would therefore be necessary to collect, analyze and document data on this matter.

On behalf of the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, I wish to thank all the Ministries and Institutions which provided data to GRENDEN. Let me also thank the Drug Control Secretariat, which functions as the National Observatory on Drugs (NOD), for its exemplary work with GRENDEN. Your dedication and perseverance are qualities that must be emulated and commended. Your accomplishments are duly noted here in Grenada, as well as, regionally and internationally.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I wish you every success in the Eleventh Annual Meeting of the Grenada Drug Epidemiology Network and National Observatory on Drugs.

I Thank You.