

# Statement by Lt.Col. the Hon. Jeffery D. Bostic, M.P., Minister of Health and Wellness, Barbados at WHA 2020

**Mr. President,**

**Honorable delegates**

Barbados has set out on a journey to strengthen its health systems in the face of and in response to the relentless COVID-19 pandemic. Within a few short weeks of the first cases being reported in China, we immediately stood up a **Health Emergency Operations Centre** to guide the implementation of a package of strategies in an effort to prevent, detect, suppress and contain the transmission COVID-19 in Barbados.

Key highlights of our response has included:

- Procuring urgently needed medical equipment and supplies, in an environment of global scarcity; and

- Strengthening the infrastructure of the healthcare system including building laboratory capacity for the diagnosis of COVID-19.

We are cognizant of the ongoing health needs of our people and we must not be paralyzed by this pandemic. We must adequately address all other pressing health concerns ranging from NCDs to maternal child health issues to disaster preparedness to name a few.

We continue to work on understanding the social, economic and political impacts of the current crisis, and to craft strategies to mitigate them with sustainable, resilient and rights-based solutions involving an array of actor with a whole of society approach.

However, implementing comprehensive health strategies aimed at suppressing transmissions and prevent them from spreading with focused efforts on linkages between health systems and

health security requires sustainable resources. Despite our country's designation as a high-income country, we and other similarly vulnerable SIDS urgently need global support and solidarity to ensure the continuity of essential health and social services to ensure the health and wellbeing of our people.

We remain exceptionally appreciative to the WHO and to PAHO and to the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) for the unwavering assistance and stewardship to Barbados and our partner countries in the Caribbean region as we aim to improve the health and quality of lives of all of our people!

**I thank you Mr President!**