

Statement by Jaime Nadal-Roig, Deputy Representative on behalf of Harold Robinson, UNFPA Representative at the launch of the MAN website Knutsford Court Hotel, January 17, 2006

Mr./Madam Chair, colleagues, ladies and Gentlemen:

I am pleased to bring greetings at the launch of the Website of the MAN (Male Action Network) on behalf of UNFPA Representative, Harold Robinson. UNFPA supports wholeheartedly the mandate of MAN, which is to examine the reality of men and to assist in facilitating men's roles in the prevention of HIV/AIDS transmission, gender based violence and the promotion of healthy development of boys and young men.

The fact is that it takes both sexes working together hand in hand as equals to realize the Millennium Development targets of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger, promoting gender equality and combating HIV/AIDS...for the truth is that men and women are indispensable partners in sexual relationships, marriage and family building. Systematic social change, the kind of change that we all want to see taking place towards equity and equality is an undertaking that requires the involvement of both men and women.

The reality though is that in most, if not all societies there are strict gender constructs that influence male behavior. In spite of the diversity among men there is still a dominant ideal model of manhood with which we are all familiar: men as providers and breadwinners. So boys learn from an early age to shun qualities that might be construed as feminine.

Besides the fact that the sexual and reproductive health needs of men are not given priority attention in many societies one of the challenges that organizations like ours face is attracting men to health clinics and to access sexual and reproductive health services where they exist. This is because many men reject notions of health/healthy lifestyle or responsible behaviours. The fact though is that sexually transmitted infections (STI's) including HIV/AIDS, and unplanned pregnancies can devastate the lives of men and women and can have negative consequences for families and communities.

Addressing the sexual and reproductive health of men results in positive outcomes for all: The more informed and more effective men become in living safer sexual and reproductive lives, the better it will be for them, for their partners and children.

This is a perspective that UNFPA strongly upholds and promotes. Our commitment to this is evident in the support that UNFPA has given to governments and various countries over the years to

promoting the sexual and reproductive health needs of men beyond their roles as women's partners.

UNFPA's contribution to the development of the MAN website is in keeping with this focus. We are confident that it will help to promote increased understanding of male gender issues in Jamaica and the Caribbean.