

Global Youth Dialogue on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR)

 GLOBAL LEADERS GROUP ON ANTIMICROBIAL RESISTANCE

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The Global Leaders Group (GLG) has identified youth as a key stakeholder group for mobilizing political and public support for efforts to tackle AMR across sectors and to popularize AMR as a social concern. The Global Youth Dialogue on AMR took place during World AMR Awareness Week (WAAW) 2023, and was hosted by Her Excellency Mia Amor Mottley, Prime Minister of Barbados and Chair of the Global Leaders Group on AMR. The event was moderated by Sherwin Bryce-Pease, Bureau Chief Correspondent for SABC News at the United Nations in New York.

Engaging youth is critical in the global response to AMR

Mr Bryce-Pease shared a message from the President of the United Nations General Assembly Dennis Francis of Trinidad and Tobago noting that by 2050, AMR deaths will be on par with deaths from cancer. He mentioned how AMR is shifting people into poverty, affecting progress on the Sustainable Development Goals.

Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organization, welcomed participants and introduced Prime Minister Mottley. Dr Tedros emphasized how engaging youth is a priority on all health issues, including AMR. He encouraged advocacy efforts from youth, as they are change-makers and can exert pressure on political leaders for action against AMR.

In her opening remarks, Prime Minister Mottley sounded the alarm on AMR as an ongoing pandemic and noted that drug resistance is increasing at an alarming rate. She emphasized that prevention, education, access to and responsible use of existing and new antimicrobials are critical in curbing AMR.

Commitment to financing the implementation of National Action Plans on AMR at the highest political levels is essential. Young people have an important role to play in mobilizing political action as part of a global movement to tackle AMR and can help to give faces and voices to those who have experienced its impact. Prime Minister Mottley asked the audience to join her in this movement.

First-hand experiences with AMR across sectors

Two youth representatives joined Prime Minister Mottley to discuss their experience with AMR in their respective fields. Ms Audrey Wong of the International Pharmaceutical Students Federation noted that she witnesses over-prescribing in her work and emphasized the importance of educating healthcare professionals on correct prescribing of antibiotics. She also noted that multisectoral approaches are vital and that pharmacy students are willing advocates and actors in the AMR response.

Ms Karina Khatic of the International Veterinary Students Association related her experience of antimicrobial use in animals. Her aim is to raise awareness of AMR among young veterinary professionals.

Prime Minister Mottley shared that AMR has affected her family. She noted that without strengthened political momentum on AMR, illness and deaths due to untreatable infections will increase.

A video compilation of youth from across the globe played during the event, highlighting that young people are concerned about a future without effective medicines and are ready to play a stronger role in the response to AMR. Participants gave examples of how young people can contribute, including through responsible use of antimicrobials at home, correct disposal of medicines and advocacy in their respective professions and sectors.

AMR affects livelihoods and economies

Prime Minister Mottley noted that the economic impact of AMR will grow without a more robust response, and that the consequences of inaction are likely to fall on the poorest countries. She stated that reform to the global financial architecture is essential to address major global crises such as climate change and AMR and to mitigate their impact on low- and middle-income countries.

In closing, Prime Minister Mottley noted that action in response to the climate crisis began with young people, and they have a leading role to play in the response to AMR. She provided some suggestions on how youth can take action against AMR, including starting grass roots movements with their peers to emphasize everyone's right to a healthy life, writing to political leaders and holding them accountable on their actions, and using social media to raise awareness about AMR.

Prime Minister Mottley noted that the upcoming High-level Meeting on AMR at the United Nations General Assembly in 2024 is an opportunity for political leaders to set clear targets and take bold and concrete action to address AMR. She stands to support youth in building a mass movement to tackle this challenge.