

UN, NYC Mayor's office team up to promote Global Goals' mental health targets

25 January 2017 – Addressing an event on mental health, a special advisor to the President of the United Nations General Assembly today stressed the importance of mental health for all actions to be taken to achieve sustainable development goals.

"All actions start with good health," Dessima Williams, Special Adviser on Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, told an event titled 'Mental Health for All: Local Strategies,' organized by the New York City Mayor's Office for International Affairs and its cosponsors, including the World Health Organization (WHO).

She said that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), adopted by UN Member States in September 2015, are all interlinked, and noted that Goal 3 addresses mental health.

"We all know that the SDGs are indivisible," she continued, explaining that, for example, education has an impact on skills, knowledge, attitudes and values, and in this way can help change production and consumption behaviours and patterns.

The Office of the President of the General Assembly, she said, is raising awareness of all the SDGs.

She noted that Assembly President Peter Thomson had sent a letter to all Heads of Government, urging them to support teaching about the SDGs. The Office was represented at the World Innovation Summit for Health, held in Doha, Qatar, last year, and which featured some 1,400 health professionals examining a report on healthy populations.



Dessima Williams, Special Adviser on Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals, addresses at UN Headquarters an event titled 'Mental Health for All: Local Strategies.' UN Photo/Evan Schneider

The Office is also raising the awareness of the need for universal healthcare and universal health care coverage by setting aside 12 December to mark the Universal Healthcare Coverage Day.

While applauding New York City's local initiative on mental health, Ms. Dessima stressed the worldwide need to end the stigma surrounding mental health and to convey the importance of early attention for good mental health "as a good in itself and as a conduit to a life worth living."

Also addressing the event were Chirlane McCray, First Lady of New York City, Caleb Otto, Permanent Representative of Palau to the United Nations, and Richard Buery, Deputy Mayor of New York City for Strategic Policy Initiatives.

The event also included a panel discussion on NYC's initiative, "ThriveNYC: Local roadmap to mental health."