

CASE FOR URGENT POLITICAL ACTION

CARICOM Caucus of Ministers of Health, Washington, DC. September 28th, 2014

The Development of a Caribbean Region-Wide Comprehensive Policy On Alcohol

Context

The Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC) is a registered non-governmental organisation and regional NCD Alliance, formed in 2008. Membership of the HCC presently consists of more than 50 Caribbean-based health NGOs and over 55 not-for-profit organisations; with in excess of 200 individual members based in the Caribbean and across the globe. The mission of the HCC is to harness the power of civil society, in collaboration with government, private enterprise, academia, and international partners, in the development and implementation of plans for the prevention and management of chronic diseases (NCDs) among empowered Caribbean people. Our vision is the reduction of death and disability from NCDs among people in the Caribbean. Misuse of alcohol is recognised as a major risk factor for NCDs.

Rationale

Whereas the CARICOM region has advocated for an increased focus by the international community on NCDs, lobbied for the United Nations High Level Meeting on NCDs, 2011, developed the Declaration of Port-of-Spain which focuses on NCDs and encourages the global community to recognize the impact NCDs have on the human resources and economies of small states.

Whereas alcohol use is recognized as a major contributor to NCDs including hypertension, cancer, stroke, and liver disease; and is a major contributor to violence, including domestic violence, and injury among peoples of the Caribbean with an estimated 5.4% of deaths in the Americas in 2002 attributable to alcohol, compared to the world figure of 3.7% (46% higher than the global average); and is responsible for nearly 10% of all Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALY) lost in the Region in 2002, compared to the global figure of 4.4%; and further, 20-50% of road traffic fatalities in the region are alcohol related; and 50.5% of alcohol-attributable deaths in the Americas in 2002 are due to injuries and violence.

Whereas, in 2010, the Member States of the WHO approved by consensus a **Global Strategy** to reduce alcohol-related problems. In 2011, the WHO organized the 1st meeting between countries in Geneva to discuss mechanisms and priorities for implementing the Global Strategy, which included 23 countries from the Pan American Region. Those 23 participating countries formed the Pan-American Network on Alcohol and Public Health (**PANNAPH**), led by Mexico and vice-chaired by Brazil.



Whereas, in 2011, Member States of PAHO/WHO adopted a **Regional Plan of Action** at the 51st Directing Council Meeting of PAHO/WHO, titled “Plan of Action to Reduce Harmful Use of Alcohol” which promotes a public health and human rights approach to lowering the levels of per capita alcohol consumption in the population, as well as reducing alcohol-related harm in the Americas and Caribbean.

Whereas PAHO/WHO urged Member States to, among other issues, identify underage and harmful alcohol consumption as a public health priority and develop plans and/or introduce measures to reduce its public health impact.

Request

Given the passage of time and the lack of progress on these issues, the HCC seeks a commitment by and from the CARICOM Ministers of Health, meeting in Caucus in Washington, DC, USA, in September, 2014, to work vigorously and with some urgency to create a region-wide comprehensive policy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol as a public health priority.

To this end, we ask that the Caucus of CARICOM Health Ministers, through the appropriate mechanisms available to it, establish a broad-based committee to create a region-wide comprehensive policy on alcohol. Such a committee should include representatives of civil society and be mandated to respond within a predetermined timeframe.

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