

SIDE EVENT STATEMENT TAH-----22ND SEPTEMBER 2017

Advancing the multi-sectoral approach to ending childhood obesity in SIDS

The Caribbean member states of the UN have for many years adopted a multi-sectoral approach to NCD prevention and control with civil society organisations contributing significantly to that effort.

Civil society has special relevance to Small Island Nation States which often lack human and financial capacity and are vulnerable to the effects of climate change (hurricanes and flooding); to the adverse impact of international trade agreements, and to international monetary and agricultural policies that often act to the disadvantage of these countries.

The multi-sectoral civil society led experiences in the Caribbean in NCD prevention and control have applicability in other SIDS, and countries outside this group which share similar socio-economic and developmental environments.

In the Caribbean, over the past decade two multi-sectoral platforms have been developed to address the NCDs. The first at the country level is National NCD Commissions appointed by the Minister of Health to advise and support national programmes of NCD prevention and control.

The second platform operates at the regional level. This is the Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC) - a Civil Society NCD Alliance established as an outcome of the CARICOM Heads of Government NCD Summit in 2007.

This alliance has since its formation engaged in region-wide programmes of advocacy, communication enhancement, capacity building and accountability for action.

And despite recognised challenges in measuring civil society's impact, has contributed meaningfully to many NCD related outcomes in the Region.

In many respects HCC has created an enabling environment for appropriate policy and legislation, for informed personal and collective action and for private sector engagement.

Today we launch the HCC's ***“Civil Society Action Plan, 2017-2021, Preventing Childhood Obesity in the Caribbean”***, supported by the NCD Alliance, with partial funding by the Caribbean Development Bank.

The Plan calls for actions that include: banning the sale, marketing and promotion of unhealthy foods and sugar sweetened beverages particularly to children in schools; taxation on unhealthy foods and sugar sweetened beverages; mandatory nutrition labelling; enactment of legislation to encourage breast feeding, and promotion of physical activity in schools.

Flash drives of the Plan have been made available by Sagicor, a leading regional financial private sector business, and supporter, of the HCC.

As we look to 2035, there is need for stronger support for civil society in small nation states to allow the sector to be a more effective partner in NCD prevention and control. This is particularly needed in the reduction of childhood obesity - an area in which civil society can have significant impact even as policies are put in place and legislation enacted to address this issue.

In closing, I subscribe to the view that civil society has a powerful contribution to make in supporting and contributing to the 2025

NCD Targets and the SDGs, and to this end we in the HCC endorse the call for the establishment of a UN Civil Society Task Force to support the preparations for the 2018 High level Meeting as occurred prior to the UNHLM on NCDS in 2011.

SAMPLE OF HCC ACHIEVEMENTS

Some specific outcomes to which the HCC has contributed meaningfully include; tax on SSBs in Barbados; heightened awareness with policies in place in some countries to protect children while in the school environment; establishment of a well-received weekly communication tool (Weekly News Roundup); scaling up of workplace wellness programmes; advocacy around tobacco control legislation in several Caribbean countries; improved governance, management and functioning of national NGOs, and finally awareness and determination to address childhood obesity as a regional priority.

HEADS OF GOVERNMENT STATEMENT ON CHILDHOOD OBESITY

Heads of Government of CARICOM countries at Summit meeting earlier this year, noted with concern that obesity in children represented the greatest threat to the health of future generations with the level of overweight and obesity being more than 30 % in both primary and secondary school populations in many Member States.

Heads of Government also supported the strengthening of domestic food production along with the promotion and consumption of nutritious indigenous foods.

Heads of Government urged the promotion of Physical Exercise in school-age children and an acceleration of the Public Education Programme on Healthy lifestyles.

THE HCC CHILDHOOD OBESITY PLAN

require the banning of the sale, marketing and promotion of unhealthy foods and sugar sweetened beverages to children in schools and more widely; taxation on unhealthy foods; mandatory nutrition labelling; enactment of legislation related to

the international code of marketing of breast milk substitutes, and promotion of physical activity in schools.