



PREPARING CARICOM MINISTRIES OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS FOR THE 3rd UN HIGH-LEVEL MEETING ON NCDs AND BEYOND



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The 3rd United Nations High-level Meeting on NCDs

The 3rd United Nations High-level Meeting (HLM3) on non-communicable diseases (NCDs) will be held on **Thursday, 27th September 2018**, during the high-level week of the UN General Assembly under the theme: Scaling up multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral responses to the prevention and control of NCDs in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The HLM3 is a unique opportunity for governments to showcase progress on NCDs and make bold political commitments towards addressing the NCD epidemic. Additional details can be found in the **Final Draft of Modalities Resolution for the 3rd High-level Meeting on NCDs (30 March 2018)**.

This will be the first such HLM held since the launch of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**, a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity aimed at transforming the world we live in. The agenda provides an international policy roadmap, guiding member state actions in the coming decade. The **SDGs** contain 17 interconnected goals including **goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages** and an NCD **target 3.4: Reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being**. NCDs are a development issue and the achievement of target 3.4 is core to realization of the broader SDG agenda.

The **Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC)** – a regional civil society alliance of more than **100 organisations established 10 years** ago to contribute to NCD prevention and control in the Caribbean recognises that nationally, regionally and globally, we are at a critical moment in the prevention and control of NCDs – one that requires political leaders to take bold and decisive action to halt and reverse the adverse economic and health consequences of NCDs. The HCC is presently committed to galvanizing civil society and wider stakeholders to call for attendance of Heads of Government at the upcoming HLM3 as a demonstration of commitment to accelerated action at the national and regional levels.

This briefing note was developed by the HCC for CARICOM Ministries of Foreign Affairs in recognition of the critical role played by these stakeholders in the lead up to and after the HLM3.

NCDs and their Burden in the Caribbean

NCDs are currently the leading cause of premature death worldwide. The main NCDs are cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancers and chronic respiratory diseases. A significant percentage of these diseases are preventable through the reduction of their four main modifiable risk factors: exposure to tobacco smoke, harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diets and physical inactivity.

IN THE CARIBBEAN

NCDs are responsible for around **8 out of 10 DEATHS**



40%
of NCD DEATHS
OCCUR PREMATURELY
before 70 years¹

In the Caribbean, NCDs are responsible for around 8 out of 10 deaths and 40% of NCD deaths occur prematurely before 70 years¹. CARICOM States have some of the highest NCD prevalence rates globally and the highest probability of dying prematurely from NCDs in the Americas. NCDs also represent a significant drain on CARICOM Member States' limited economic resources and pose a real threat to their long-term development prospects. The recent Investment Case for the Prevention and Control of NCDs in Jamaica found that Jamaica's economy is projected to lose over 77.1 billion JMD over the 15-year period between 2017-2032, in terms of direct (treatment costs) and indirect costs (lost productivity) due to cardiovascular disease (CVD) and diabetes complications alone². The first such investment case undertaken in Barbados in 2015 found that the country was spending USD\$105 million per year on cardiovascular disease (hypertension, stroke, and heart attack) and diabetes. This cost included USD\$32 million in direct costs for health-care interventions and USD\$73 million in indirect costs due to losses in productivity³. Against the background of the tremendous economic burden of NCDs and the region's poor performance on the most recent **NCD Progress Monitor 2017** and the **2017 Port of Spain Summit Progress Grid**, action is desperately needed to bring the Caribbean region back on track to achieve the **global 2025 NCD targets** and the **Sustainable Development Goals**, most notably **Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages**.

¹ Pan American Health Organization, 2017. Regional mortality estimates produced with the last available data (2010-2015). Prepared by NMH/PAHO using the Regional Mortality Dataset.

² PAHO/WHO, Ministry of Health, Jamaica, UNDP, and RTI International. Investment case for NCDs in Jamaica – Infographic (publication pending).

³ <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/259689/WHO-NMH-NMA-17.97-eng.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

Getting Back on Track Means Strong Political Leadership

The plans are not well promoted, resourced, or monitored, and in most cases are not used to guide NCD prevention and control interventions.

Commitment to action at the highest levels from CARICOM Heads of Government is vital. CARICOM leaders were trailblazers in 2007 when they held a Summit on NCDs and issued the Declaration of Port of Spain: Uniting to Stop the Epidemic of Chronic NCDs and also in 2011 when six CARICOM Heads of State and Government attended the historic 1st UN HLM on NCDs at which they showed significant leadership. This level of leadership however has waned as it is noted that no Heads of State or Government from CARICOM were in attendance at the 2nd HLM in 2014.

Over the years, Caribbean leaders have shown great consistency in acknowledging the NCD crisis and pledging action – however this has not been translated into effective country level policies and programmes. For example, 8 of the 12 countries in the Americas that have not implemented any of the **WHO Tobacco Best Buys** at the highest level are CARICOM countries. Implementation of the **WHO Healthy Diet Best Buys** has also been sluggish with only the indicator relating to public awareness campaigns showing progress, while policies that require regulations lag behind. Although many CARICOM countries have NCD prevention and control strategic plans or action plans, there is a significant “implementation deficit”. The plans are not well promoted, resourced, or monitored, and in most cases are not used to guide NCD prevention and control interventions.

Engaging All Sectors: The Role of Ministries of Foreign Affairs

In 2007, CARICOM Heads of Government recognised that the NCD epidemic required a “whole of government, whole of society” response. Action on NCDs is cross-cutting and its impact is far-reaching. Engaging all sectors, including Ministries of Foreign Affairs, to support an accelerated whole-of-government and whole-of-society regional NCD response in the short, medium and longer term will have lasting effects and place the region on a clear path towards the achievement of the health SDG and the other 16 goals within the 2030 agenda.

From a Ministry of Foreign Affairs perspective, a multisectoral approach means that the role of both health and non-health sectors in reducing NCDs needs to be advocated and championed in all fora – bilateral, regional and multilateral, across the range of international organisations – as a development issue and a priority area for individual CARICOM Member States, as well as for the region as a whole.

Ministries of Foreign Affairs should also highlight the importance of the “whole-of-society” approach, where governments, civil society and the private sector collaborate, with due regard to avoiding or managing conflicts of interests that may arise from involvement with the private sector. In particular, the underappreciated role of civil society in advocacy, communication, accountability, and in the development of equitable policies and programmes, as the “voice of the voiceless” should be brought to the fore.

Diplomatic Missions and Embassies should be sensitised and encouraged to incorporate NCD issues into their respective work programmes and negotiating fora, as well as to speak to the issue in “bilaterals” with our key international partners. NCDs should be linked to other narratives such as climate change, reproductive, maternal, newborn and child health (RMNCH), trade, poverty, and sustainable food systems. In addition to the social determinants of NCDs, there is increasing recognition of the role of private interests and the resulting rapid proliferation of unhealthy commodities, which calls into focus

the need to more closely explore the commercial determinants of ill health and the critical roles of governments in regulating industry (of particular importance to CARICOM countries and other small island nation states). Ministers and Ministries of Foreign Affairs can also help encourage other Ministers and Ministries to speak to these cross-sectoral issues. For example, Argentina has used its chairmanship of the G20 group to introduce the issue of childhood obesity onto the agenda for discussion at its next meeting. CARICOM Member States can also explore and build partnerships with like-minded states within and outside the Americas to build greater consensus at the international level on approaches to tackling and financing NCD prevention and control. Barbados recently used its membership in the Organisation of American States (OAS) to secure a Joint High-Level Session of the OAS Permanent Council and the Inter-American Council for Integral Development on the topic “Progress, partnerships and the way forward for the response to non-communicable diseases in the Americas”.

HCC Civil Society HLM3 Priorities for the Outcome Document

In preparation for the HLM3 the HCC, in consultation with our membership has identified nine (9) priority areas of focus when negotiating the HLM3 outcome document⁴.

⁴ Six of these (1-6) are based on the global NCD Alliance HLM3 campaign priorities. All HCC priorities arrived at through consultation and consensus.

1



Put People First

Those most affected by NCDs need to be at the centre of decision making around NCD policy and programming.

4



Adopt Smart Fiscal Policies that Promote Health

i.e. taxation on unhealthy commodities namely tobacco, alcohol and SSBs, which are WHO recommended Best Buys.

7



Strengthen post disaster health response systems to provide NCD treatment and care in disaster settings

(i.e. hurricanes and flash floods) recognizing the unique vulnerabilities of SIDS in the context of climate change.

2



Boost Financing for NCD prevention and control

NCDs are consuming national health budgets at astounding rates which cannot be sustained by our fragile economies.

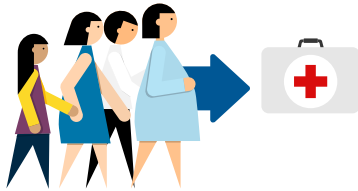
3



Step up action on childhood obesity

Childhood obesity is an urgent regional and global issue which threatens to undermine the health of entire generations and there are clear global, regional and national recommendations for action.

5



Save lives through equitable access to NCD treatment and UHC

Access to high quality health care is a basic human right.

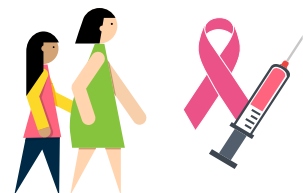
6



Improve accountability for progress, results and resources

Including investment in national health surveillance systems such as national NCD registries.

8



Eradicate Cervical Cancer

Through the provision of the HPV vaccine throughout the region.

9



Make the Caribbean a Smoke Free Zone

Through full compliance with Articles of the FCTC to which most of the countries are signatories.

HCC Civil Society Key Asks for HLM3 Preparatory Process

- 1** The leveraging of key advocacy opportunities over the period leading up to the HLM3 including but not limited to:
 - a** The 21st Session of the Council for Foreign and Community Relations (COFCOR), May 7-8, 2018 in the Bahamas.
 - b** The 2018 Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting, Sunday, 20 May 2018 in Geneva.
 - c** The 71st World Health Assembly, May 21-26, 2018 in Geneva.
 - d** The CARICOM CMOs meeting to be held on the margins of the 63rd CARPHA Health Research Conference, June 14-16, 2018 in St. Kitts and Nevis.
 - e** 39th Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government, July 4-6, 2018 in Jamaica.
 - f** UN Civil Society Hearing, July 5th in New York.
- 2** The support of CARICOM Ministries of Foreign Affairs for the inclusion of at least one civil society representative on their delegations to the HLM3.
- 3** The sharing of HCC Civil Society Priorities with all key Foreign Service officials engaged in the outcome document negotiations.
- 4** The liaising of Permanent Representatives in New York with the HCC to obtain technical support and identify and capitalise on advocacy opportunities for high-level representation at the HLM3.
- 5** Agreement to collectively collaborate with HCC and/or NCD Alliance in arranging meetings and staging side events prior to and on the margins of the HLM3.

Suggested Actions to support Highest Level Attendance at the HLM3 and a Strong Outcome Document

The months leading up to the HLM will be critical for: 1. Promoting high-level CARICOM attendance and participation at the HLM3; and 2. Actively participating in the outcome document negotiations to ensure CARICOM priorities are reflected in the final document.

Suggested actions for the various CARICOM Member States' Missions and Ambassadors to the UN in New York and in Washington, DC, as well as their Permanent Missions in Geneva are listed below.

Permanent Missions to the United Nations, New York Bilaterals; UNGA; human rights bodies

- Support and participate in the negotiations for the Third High-level Meeting on NCDs, 27 September 2018.
 - Earmark this area for priority action at this time, due to the short period remaining to finalise negotiations prior to the meeting. Ministries of Foreign Affairs need to ensure that their Permanent Missions are fully engaged in all aspects of the negotiations, sending a strong signal of the priority which CARICOM States attach to this issue and our commitment to having a meaningful outcome to the meeting. Capitals also need to ensure that Missions are supported with the appropriate technical expertise and feedback to allow them to function effectively in these deliberations.
 - Engage fully in the Outcome Document negotiations, drawing on technical advice and expertise from Capitals and key stakeholders such as the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) and the HCC.
 - Lobby for CARICOM representation on one or both of the two consecutive multi-stakeholder panels at the HLM.
 - Lobby for CARICOM representatives to be one of the two co-chairs appointed for each of the multi-stakeholder panels. The representatives will be appointed by the President of the General Assembly from among the Heads of State or Government attending the HLM.
 - Refer to the HCC Civil Society Priority areas to inform the negotiation process.
- Build coalitions with like-minded States.
- Participate in discussions within the various human rights bodies (including the Human Rights Committee, the Committee on the Rights of the Child, The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, and the UN Group of Friends of Children) to strengthen our position in terms of efforts to address NCDs generally, and around priority areas such as childhood obesity.
- Identify potential sources of technical assistance or cooperation (within and outside the UN, and regionally and nationally) to assist with Capital's efforts to address NCDs including priority issues such as tobacco control and childhood obesity prevention.

Geneva Permanent Mission

Bilaterals; UN human rights bodies; World Trade Organisation (WTO), United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), World Health Organisation (WHO), World Intellectual Property Organisation (WIPO) etc.

- Monitor and participate in discussions on issues which impact on efforts to address NCDs or speak to the link between trade and health more specifically. Here it is worth highlighting current discussions on front-of-pack labelling, etcetera, within the Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade (which traditionally is not a committee that would be actively covered by the CARICOM Permanent Missions).
- Monitor and participate in dispute settlement proceedings that impact on efforts to address NCDs as was done in the tobacco plain packaging case brought to the WTO by the tobacco industry against the Government of Australia. In this instance, Trinidad and Tobago participated as a third party in this historic dispute and the HCC, upon the request of the Australian Foreign Office in Trinidad and Tobago, submitted an Amicus Curiae Brief in support of Australia. CARICOM Permanent Missions are encouraged to speak to the panel report once it is released to the Dispute Settlement Body and, going forward, CARICOM Missions can encourage local civil society partners to submit Amicus Briefs on appropriate situations.
- Monitor intellectual property discussions within WIPO and the TRIPS Council which can impact on efforts to address NCDs e.g. plain packaging (the industry argument here being that it infringes the cigarette manufacturer's trademark rights).
- Participate in discussions within the various human rights bodies (particularly the Committee on the Rights of the Child) that can be used to strengthen our position in terms of our efforts to address NCDs and in particular priority issues such as tobacco control and childhood obesity prevention.

Washington DC Embassy

Bilaterals; Organisation of American States and PAHO

- Utilise key inter-governmental platforms to advance high-level participation at the HLM3. This includes the OAS General Assembly, June 3-5, 2018, in Washington D.C. A resolution on NCD prevention and control is presently being negotiated in Washington. One of the central elements of that resolution is a call for 'governments to be well prepared and represented at the highest possible political level at the UNHLM'.
- Support and participate in work within PAHO on NCDs and the identification of priority areas, including tobacco control and childhood obesity prevention.
- Identify potential sources of technical assistance or cooperation to assist with Capital's efforts to address NCDs and priority issues identified by Heads, such as tobacco control and childhood obesity prevention, as well as to identify and share best practices within the Americas.
- Undertake coalition building with like-minded States within the Americas.
- Continue support for the introduction of NCDs as a broader development issue within the Permanent Council of the OAS and its inclusion in the agenda and work programme of the OAS (note the Inter-American Task Force on NCDs that includes the OAS, PAHO, and other agencies of the Inter-American System).

Finally, it is important to ensure that there are well-functioning channels of communication between these respective Missions and Embassies, as well as with Capitals and the CARICOM Secretariat, PAHO, CARPHA, and HLM3 civil society advocates such as the Healthy Caribbean Coalition and the NCD Alliance.

RESOURCES

[HCC HLM3 webpage for additional resources](#)

[NCD Alliance HLM3 web resources](#)

[UN/WHO HLM3 web resource](#)

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