

## HCC OPEN LETTER

# TO CARICOM HEADS OF GOVERNMENT

AT THE 39TH REGULAR MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF HEADS OF GOVERNMENT JULY 4-6, 2018, KINGSTON,  
JAMAICA

June 29, 2018

Dear Honourable Heads of *Government of CARICOM*,

On the occasion of this, the Thirty-Ninth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC) calls on you, Caribbean Heads of Government and State, to indicate your commitment to addressing one of our region's most pressing development issues – noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) - by attending the **3<sup>rd</sup> United Nations High-Level Meeting on NCDs**.

This year on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018 in New York, the United Nations will host the **3<sup>rd</sup> High-Level Meeting on NCDs** during the 73<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of the UN General Assembly. The **3<sup>rd</sup> High-Level Meeting on NCDs** comes at a critical time when globally and in the Caribbean, rising rates of NCDs are vastly outpacing prevention and control efforts. Leaders from across the globe are reaffirming their resolve to take bold steps to reduce unnecessary suffering and death caused by these diseases by attending the **3<sup>rd</sup> High-Level Meeting on NCDs**.

CARICOM states played an important role in catapulting NCDs onto the global health agenda beginning in 2007 with the seminal Port of Spain Declaration. This was followed by the 1<sup>st</sup> UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs in 2011 which was attended by a significant number of CARICOM Heads who declared in a strong, unified voice that the prevention and control of NCDs was of the highest priority for the region. Almost 10 years after the 1<sup>st</sup> UN High-Level Meeting, progress in NCD prevention and control is uneven and the region is off track to meet critical NCD targets. NCDs, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancers and chronic respiratory diseases, are the leading cause of premature deaths worldwide. In the Caribbean, 8 out of 10 deaths are attributable to NCDs of which 40% occur prematurely before the age of 70 years.

As unnecessary death and disability continue to rise, so do the associated costs of preventing and controlling these diseases. The NCD crisis is a significant burden on the limited economic resources of CARICOM States. Inadequate action on NCDs threatens to cost regional governments hundreds of millions of dollars – a luxury we cannot afford given the current economic climate. Action at the highest levels from CARICOM Heads of Government and State is therefore vital.

The upcoming **3<sup>rd</sup> UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs** provides a unique opportunity for CARICOM governments to reaffirm their political leadership and make bold and decisive commitments to accelerate country action on NCDs. Never has there been a time where NCD leadership is more urgently needed. The **3<sup>rd</sup> High-Level Meeting on NCDs** also provides a platform for CARICOM to share progress, discuss challenges and lessons learned and pledge to prioritize NCD actions which fast-track the implementation of WHO recommended Best Buy policies and programmes in support of the achievement of the 2025 global NCD targets and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Therefore in recognition of the singular importance of the **3<sup>rd</sup> High-Level Meeting on NCDs**; and the growing burden of NCDs; and the considerable economic, social and health burden of this group of diseases in the region; we, the 100+ members of the Healthy Caribbean Coalition **ask the following of CARICOM Heads of Government and State to:**

1. Commit to provide strong global, regional and national leadership on NCD prevention and control and further commit to and attend the **3<sup>rd</sup> UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs** on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2018.
2. Include a statement of commitment to attend the **3<sup>rd</sup> UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs** in the official Communiqué emerging from this, the Thirty-Ninth Regular Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).
3. Support HCC's nine regionally endorsed NCD advocacy priorities\* for inclusion in the **3<sup>rd</sup> High-Level Meeting on NCDs** outcome document.
4. Support one or more CARICOM Heads of Government or State to have a lead role in at least one of the multi-stakeholder panels at the **3<sup>rd</sup> High-Level Meeting on NCDs**.
5. Support the hosting of an event on the margins of the **3<sup>rd</sup> High-Level Meeting on NCDs** led by CARICOM Heads of Government as was done in 2011 at the 1st UN HLM on NCDs.
6. Endorse the inclusion of a representative from a Civil Society Organisation (CSO) on country delegations to the **3<sup>rd</sup> UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs** in recognition that the NCD epidemic requires a whole-of-society response.

The world and our region have clear NCD targets and evidence-based, cost-effective solutions. The High-Level Meeting is our collective opportunity to make bold commitments on how to boost investment and high-level political action to implement at scale. NCD action is an investment, not a cost, and strategic, forward-looking responses across prevention and control will not only save lives but mitigate escalating health care costs.

The Healthy Caribbean Coalition is committed to providing ongoing support to Caribbean governments and we look forward to your attendance on September 27<sup>th</sup> at the **3<sup>rd</sup> UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs** as we work towards a successful HLM3 and beyond.

*Board of Directors and members of the Healthy Caribbean Coalition  
June 29, 2018*


\* HCC's nine regionally endorsed NCD advocacy priorities



**HCC Advocacy Priorities for the 3<sup>rd</sup> UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs Outcome Document.**

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<p><b>1</b></p>  <p><b>Put People First</b> Those most affected by NCDs need to be at the centre of decision making around NCD policy and programming.</p>	<p><b>2</b></p>  <p><b>Boost Financing for NCD prevention and control</b> NCDs are consuming national health budgets at astounding rates which cannot be sustained by our fragile economies.</p>	<p><b>3</b></p>  <p><b>Step up action on childhood obesity</b> 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.</p>
<p><b>4</b></p>  <p><b>Adopt Smart Fiscal Policies that Promote Health</b> i.e. taxation on unhealthy commodities namely tobacco, alcohol and SSBs, which are WHO recommended Best Buys.</p>	<p><b>5</b></p>  <p><b>Save lives through equitable access to NCD treatment and UHC</b> Access to high quality health care is a basic human right.</p>	<p><b>6</b></p>  <p><b>Improve accountability for progress, results and resources</b> Including investment in national health surveillance systems such as national NCD registries.</p>
<p><b>7</b></p>  <p><b>Strengthen post disaster health response systems to provide NCD treatment and care in disaster settings</b> (i.e. hurricanes and flash floods) recognizing the unique vulnerabilities of SIDS in the context of climate change.</p>	<p><b>8</b></p>  <p><b>Eradicate Cervical Cancer</b> Through the provision of the HPV vaccine throughout the region.</p>	<p><b>9</b></p>  <p><b>Make the Caribbean a Smoke Free Zone</b> Through full compliance with Articles of the FCTC to which most of the countries are signatories.</p>

### About Healthy Caribbean Coalition

The Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC) is a registered not-for-profit organisation formed in 2008, arising from the 2007 Declaration of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) on non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The HCC is the only regional NCD alliance of over 100 health and non-health civil society organisations (CSOs).

The HCC works closely with regional and international leaders in NCD prevention to leverage the power of civil society by strengthening and supporting its membership in the implementation of programmes aimed at reducing the morbidity and mortality associated with NCDs.