# A CIVIL SOCIETY CALL TO **URGENT ACTION**

FOR THE CARIBBEAN REGION TO ACCELERATE NUTRITION POLICIES FOR THE CREATION OF HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS FOR CARIBBEAN CHILDREN

Arising out of a multisectoral regional meeting "Accelerating Nutrition Policies in the Caribbean: Creating Supportive Environments for Healthy Children", 17-18 September 2019 in Bridgetown, Barbados, the Board of Directors and the Members of the Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC), are calling for the urgent acceleration of nutrition policies in the Caribbean to create healthier food environments and address the epidemic of overweight and obesity among Caribbean children2.

## THE CALL The HCC is calling on

the Caribbean region to work across sectors in partnership to achieve the urgent implementation of the following

**3 PRIORITY NUTRITION POLICIES** 



MANDATORY 'HIGH IN' FRONT OF

**BEVERAGES IN SCHOOL SETTINGS** and ensuring the availability of free drinking water to reduce

**BANNING THE SALE AND** 

the consumption of these beverages among children.

> **BEVERAGES** of at least 20% to reduce the consumption of these beverages among children.





Executive Summary<sup>3</sup>, the PAHO Plan of Action for the Prevention of Obesity in Children and Adolescents<sup>4</sup> the CARPHA 6-Point Policy Package and the HCC Civil Society Action Plan 2017-2021: Preventing Childhood Obesity in the Caribbean (CSAP)<sup>5</sup>, it is critical to prioritize. THE HIGH-LEVEL COMMITMENT TO ADDRESS THE PROBLEM

Although the HCC recognises that a holistic package of policy interventions is needed to effectively address overweight and obesity as identified in the WHO Report of the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity Implementation Plan:

# of the problem and the need for an urgent response.

38th CARICOM Summit, on the 10-year

2018 2016 2017

CARICOM Heads of Government and State have acknowledged the scale and severity

#### 37th Regular Meeting of CARICOM Heads of

**Government and State** A pledge was made

"to address issues such as banning advertisement of potentially harmful foods which specifically target children; and elevating taxes on foods high in sugar, salt and trans-fats". THE CONTEXT

### anniversary of the Port of Spain Declaration, Heads of Government and State

"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".

Endorsed a number of priorities for the 3<sup>rd</sup> UN High Level Meeting on Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs)

Government and State

39th Summit, CARICOM Heads of

including: "implementing policies geared to preventing childhood obesity, including health-promoting school environments and Front of Package (FOP) labelling".

Policies with population-

level impact are required to

modify the food system and

### **UNHEALTHY DIET** is one of the major modifiable risk factors for NCDs and the PRIMARY **CONTRIBUTOR TO OVERWEIGHT AND OBESITY.**

Unhealthy diets alone pose a greater RISK **TO MORBIDITY AND** 

sex, alcohol, drug, and tobacco use combined6.

MORTALITY than do unsafe



policy solutions through a

**RIGHTS-BASED** lens, one which

consequently places them on a

trajectory for unhealthy

**CREATE ENVIRONMENTS IN** WHICH HEALTHY CHOICES ARE EASY CHOICES and the major responsibility for such choices shifts towards governments and away from individuals.

for creating the environments that ensure the **HEALTH AND** WELLBEING OF THEIR CITIZENS COMES FIRST. In the fast tracking of these policies the following must be REMEMBERED:

Governments are

ultimately responsible

#### 3 Childhood overweight and It is vital to view the issue There is clear **EVIDENCE** obesity is a SOCIAL JUSTICE of childhood obesity and the both from within and outside ISSUE and represents at its core need to urgently implement of the region to support the

child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health" under Article 24 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child<sup>7</sup>. All CARICOM Member States have ratified this **CONVENTION.** 

a violation of "the right of the





development.



We recognise the primary

**CALL ON THE CARICOM** 

responsibility of governments as

the custodians of public health and

**POLITICAL LEADERSHIP TO:** 

acknowledges that the current environment in which children are conceived, born and grow is inherently obesogenic and

weights and early onset NCDs from the womb. A FOOD SYSTEMS APPROACH is required to reorient Caribbean

diets away from ultra-processed

foods high in fats, sugars, and

sustainable food systems.

salt, towards healthy food from



TRANSPARENT AND



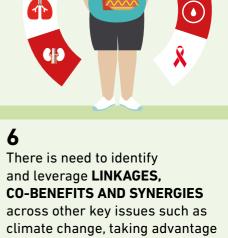
childhood obesity.

achieving multisectorality.

nutrition policy development.

implementation of these policies as effective tools to modify behaviours towards the

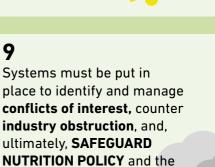
consumption of healthy foods and making healthier choices.



of resources available through

those linkages.

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health of the region's children.

## Work with regional and international partners to build the technical capacity in key ministries (including health, education, trade, finance, agriculture, and

legislation and regulations. SAFEGUARD NUTRITION POLICY and wider public health from private interests through the

implementation of processes to manage, and avoid where possible, conflicts of interest and counter i<mark>nd</mark>ustry in<mark>ter</mark>ferenc<mark>e a</mark>nd <mark>obs</mark>tr<mark>uction i</mark>n healt<mark>hy</mark>

Work with regional and international partners to BUILD THE CAPACITY of governments to design, implement, enforce, and monitor policies, and enact supporting

commerce) and ensure POLICY COHERENCE.

Support the establishment and strengthening of

NATIONAL NCD COMMISSIONS to play their role in

PROTECT the policy process

development process.

through collaboration.

policies.

**PROMOTE** the formation of

National NCD Alliances and/or

Childhood Obesity Coalitions to

support the amplification of voices

**WORK** with partners to implement

national and regional awareness

campaigns in order to create strong social movements supportive of healthy nutrition

**HOLD** political leadership

by identifying and highlighting instances of conflict of interest, industry threats or interference, and the undermining of the policy

**WE AS CIVIL** SOCIETY **COMMIT TO: SUPPORT** cross-country **BUILD CAPACITY** for civil sharing of experiences society actors to advocate in policy development, for healthy nutrition policies. implementation, and monitoring. SUPPORT the multisectoral effort aimed at improving nutrition in the Caribbean.

**CONTRIBUTE** to

strengthening surveillance systems

to ensure data for

monitoring.

PRESSURE governments to be

transparent in their processes.

SHARE and make easily

accessible evidence for

policy action.

publicly through various strategies, including open letters. PLAY A WATCHDOG role and monitor progress towards, and post, policy implementation.

accountable to their commitments

We recognise the role and influence of the food and beverage sector and Commit to SUPPORTING THE MULTISECTORAL EFFORT aimed at improving nutrition

> Halting interference with evidence-based, effective nutrition policy, in particular taxation of sweet beverages and front of package labelling. Recognise and manage the INHERENT CONFLICT OF INTEREST as it relates to the

Adopt inclusive business models that complement policies, legislation, and regulations

Hold the food and beverage sector accountable for RESPECTING THE RIGHT OF

Halting the sale and marketing of sweet beverages in school settings and other

**CHILDREN TO ACCESS HEALTHY FOODS AND BEVERAGES**, including:

in school settings) to provide unhealthy foods or beverages.

1 https://www.healthycaribbean.org/accelerating-nutrition-polices-in-the-caribbean/

7 https://www.ohchr.org/documents/professionalinterest/crc.pdf HEALTHY CARIBBEAN COALITION

For more information please contact the HCC at

www.healthycaribbean.org

2 HCC is using the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) definition of child as anyone below the age of eighteen (18) years. https://www.ohchr.org/documents/professionalinterest/crc.pdf

Follow the Healthy Caribbean Coalition on:

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5 https://www.healthycaribbean.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Preventing-Childhood-Obesity-in-the-Caribbean-CSAP-2017-2021.pdf

4 https://www.paho.org/hq/dmdocuments/2015/Obesity-Plan-Of-Action-Child-Eng-2015.pdf

**MENU** 

**CALL ON THE PRIVATE SECTOR TO:** 

in the Caribbean.

that ENABLE HEALTHY FOOD ENVIRONMENTS.

settings where children frequent.

food and beverage sector, specifically:

Avoid sitting on the boards of companies or entities involved in nutrition policy development. · Avoid entering into contractual arrangements with institutions (especially

6 The 2019 Lancet Report: Food in the Anthropocene: the EAT-Lancet Commission on healthy diets from sustainable food systems hcc@healthycaribbean.org or visit our website