



PERMANENT MISSION OF
JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS

Statement by

The Honourable Rudyard Spencer

Minister of Health

at the High Level Meeting on Non-Communicable Diseases

66th Session of the General Assembly

19th and 20th September 2011

United Nations, New York

Please check against delivery

Mr. President,
Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

This unprecedented Summit obliges us all to focus on a grave and increasing challenge to Jamaica, the Caribbean region and the entire global community.

It is clear that the global burden and the attendant threat of NCDs constitute one of the major challenges for development in the 21st century. As reported by the WHO, the increase in such diseases worldwide suggests that they are now responsible for more deaths than all other causes combined. NCDs are the world's number one killer and devastate poor as well as rich countries alike. Therefore, responding to NCDs is a moral, social and economic imperative.

It is therefore fitting that, in response to the leadership of the Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), global attention has been accorded to the rising epidemic of NCDs at the highest level. On behalf of my Government, I express our appreciation to all Member States for working together in the spirit of partnership and for making this vision a reality.

As a Jamaican, I am proud to congratulate Ambassador Wolfe of Jamaica who along with Ambassador Lucas of Luxembourg, served as Co-Facilitators, guiding the negotiations which culminated in the consensus document which we will adopt at the end of this meeting. I also take this opportunity to express appreciation for the words of commendation conveyed by the President of the General Assembly and other speakers to both cofacilitators.

As the first comprehensive statement by Heads at the global level of their commitment to address NCDs, the Declaration provides a good platform for on-going consideration of the developmental and other impacts of NCDs by the General Assembly. However, we are disappointed that the Declaration does not advocate more decisive action so that together we could save millions of the 52 million lives projected to be lost by 2030. Having recognized that there is a global threat which must be addressed urgently, the Declaration failed to commit the international community to increased and sustained resources to achieve this goal.

Although NCDs are a global challenge, they strike hardest at the developing world and lower income populations. Strong evidence links poverty, lack of education and other determinants to NCDs and their risk factors. The epidemic creates a vicious cycle, whereby NCDs and their risk factors worsen poverty, while poverty results in rising rates of NCDs. There is also a clear linkage between the incidence of NCDs and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Clearly, addressing NCDs comprehensively will help to eliminate poverty and create a more equitable world.

Notwithstanding our disappointment with the shortcomings of the Declaration, we achieved some gains. We emphasize the need to scale-up the implementation of multi-sectoral, cost-effective, population-wide interventions in order to reduce the impact of the common NCD risk factors. We believe that this must include health promotion and primary prevention

approaches; galvanizing actions for the prevention and control of NCDs; and integrating NCD policies and programmes into health planning processes as well as the development agenda.

Jamaica commits to those measures in the Declaration aimed at saving lives in the short term and create a healthy society which will assist in preventing NCDs in the future, namely, the commitment to eliminate unhealthy industrial 'trans-fats' in foods and an acknowledgement of the importance of all measures to reduce the consumption of tobacco. Our Government will continue to strive to increase access to affordable, safe, effective and quality-assured medicines and to improve access to palliative and rehabilitative services, particularly at the community level.

Issues at the macro-level which must occupy global attention include:

1. The at risk youth population;
2. The potential for NCDs to increase poverty;
3. The impact of NCDs on productivity and by extension GDP growth; and
4. The multiplicity of complications associated with NCDs and their impact on the health system.

Importantly, the challenge posed by NCDs necessitates the full use of the flexibilities of TRIPS, in accordance with the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health. The use of such flexibilities is central to efforts to address NCDs, particularly cancer. NCDs fall squarely within the context of the provisions of TRIPS and Doha. As a compromise package in the negotiations, this relationship was not expressed explicitly in the Declaration, but needs to be reaffirmed in **clear** terms.

We believe that this High Level Meeting must result in global consensus for a strengthened commitment to urgent action on NCDs and attendant risk factors. We urge that the General Assembly continue to take an active role in the response of member states to this epidemic. Victory in this struggle demands the concerted effort of each and every member of the global community.

I thank you for your attention.

