



**PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA
TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

REMARKS BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY E. COURTENAY RATTRAY
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE
OF JAMAICA TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

AT THE

RECEPTION ON THE OCCASION OF

**WORLD HEALTH DAY 2016
*BEAT DIABETES***

**EXPRESS BAR, UNHQ
7 APRIL 2016**

Thank you Dr. Menabde,

My colleagues, the Ambassadors of Luxembourg and Denmark,
Mr. Castro of the NCD Alliance,
Ms. Blodgett
Mrs. Steen,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am pleased to join you this afternoon as we mark World Health Day 2016 for which the focus has been embodied in the theme “*Beat Diabetes*”. Numerous health crises have confronted the global community in the past years, some gaining greater prominence than others. Media attention rightly focused on the ebola outbreak and the growing threat of the zika-virus, for example. HIV, malaria and cholera remain significant challenges that come easily to mind.

Non-communicable diseases, on the other hand, have been accurately referred to as “*the silent killers*”. They are the leading cause of premature morbidity globally, with more than fourteen million premature deaths between the ages of thirty and seventy each year, the vast majority of which occur in developing countries. Amongst NCDs, there are the big four – cardiovascular diseases, cancers, respiratory diseases and diabetes. And even, within this group, diabetes often seems to take a back seat to the big two – cancer and heart disease.

Despite this, the data shows that diabetes affects over 347 million people globally and was on track to becoming the 7th leading cause of death by 2030. The diabetes epidemic is rapidly increasing in many countries, according to WHO findings, despite a large portion of diabetes cases being preventable, and in spite of diabetes being treatable.

In Jamaica, diabetes is the second leading cause of death and has a prevalence rate of some 11.9% among adults. Worryingly, nearly a quarter of diabetics are unaware of their status – to borrow a term from HIV parlance. The prevalence of diabetes risk factors in Jamaica is also high. For overweight, it stands at 58.4%; for obesity, 26.8%; and for physical inactivity, 28.1%.

Jamaica therefore welcomes the focus on diabetes for World Health Day 2016. We have been taking action to address the diabetes epidemic and its impact on human wellbeing and national development as part of our National Strategic and Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs. This focus on diabetes supports our priority efforts to reduce premature mortality by 25% by 2025 and to reduce the prevalence rate in adults by 5% by 2018.

To do this, we have begun to promote healthy eating with the launch of food-based dietary guidelines; included the provision of individual and institutional benefits for diabetics under our National Health Fund; and are working towards strengthening the health system for the management of diabetes, among other NCDs. We believe we have been making progress, despite the ever pervasive challenge of funding the effective implementation of the National Plan.

The commitments made in the 2011 Political Declaration on NCDs, the negotiation of which my colleague Sylvie was centrally involved, as well as those made in the 2014 Review, which I had the honour to co-facilitate, have been reinforced by the commitment contained in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development under Target 3.4. Here, I must pause to acknowledge and commend the work of advocates from civil society such as the NCD Alliance, who have been diligent and relentless in ensuring that we make and maintain strong commitments to address NCDs.

The international consensus on the need to prevent and control NCDs places us in good stead to increase our efforts to tackle these silent killers. World Health Day 2016's focus on diabetes provides the opportunity for us to unmask the epidemic and exhort states and other actors to step-up action to tackle diabetes and promote healthy lives and well-being for our peoples.

Thank you.