



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

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS BY

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PERMANENT MISSION OF JAMAICA
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**SIDE EVENT ON UNIVERSAL HEALTHCARE: INTEGRATION OF
PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTHCARE FOR THE PREVENTION
AND CONTROL OF NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES (NCDs)**

**THURSDAY, 9th NOVEMBER 2017
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Excellences,
Distinguished panellists,
Colleagues,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The Permanent Mission of Jamaica is pleased to collaborate with the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of Thailand and to renew our partnership with the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the NGO Committee on Mental Health through this side event. I wish to acknowledge and to express our appreciation for the continued support of and engagement with other civil society partners who are committed to ensuring that the discussion on NCDs retains a primary space on the UN agenda.

Jamaica continues to grapple with the high economic burden resulting from non-communicable diseases (NCDs). The economic impact of the four main NCDs - cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes - is significant. According to a 2016 Harvard study, this will result in lost output of US\$ 17 billion by the year 2030 - the equivalent to an annual tax rate of 3.9%. This figure is compounded by the startling reality that 7 out of 10 Jamaicans die from one of the four main NCDs. In addition, the World Health Organization Assessment Instrument for Mental Health Systems (WHO/AIMS) reported in 2009 that depression is the most common mental health disorder in Jamaica, with approximately 33% of persons reporting significant symptoms. Against this background, Jamaica supports a holistic approach to addressing the human and economic cost of NCDs, including the integration of physical and mental health-care as an element of the response.

In order to tackle the challenges associated with NCDs, the government is working assiduously to eliminate the risk factors that increase the incidence of NCDs and to promote good mental health. Efforts, in this regard, are guided by the multi-sectoral 2013 to 2018 National Strategic and Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs, as well as the National Mental Health Policy.

As part of efforts to ensure a targeted, strategic and creative solution, the Minister of Health has championed a programme for promoting healthier policies and lifestyle changes. JAMAICA Moves, as it is dubbed, encourages Jamaicans to become more active and to join the Minister and local celebrities in sports and other physical activities that are free and open to the public.

Additionally, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information has mandated that physical activity programmes be instituted in primary and secondary schools. The Ministry is also implementing a comprehensive nutrition policy across schools to institute, as early as possible, a culture of “health is wealth.”

People with NCDs are more vulnerable to the social, economic and public health impact of natural disasters. The occurrence of natural disasters increases the burden on and often disrupts health systems, thereby impacting the prospects of rendering the effective care and management of NCDs. To this end, Jamaica is pleased to be among those countries in the Caribbean that have developed a Mental Health Disaster Preparedness Plan.

Combating NCDs requires continued and effective cooperation at all levels in order to ensure the effective promotion of global commitments. Jamaica, therefore, remains firm on the need for the UN and international organisations to redouble their efforts to support effective actions to arrest the NCD epidemic. For this reason, Jamaica welcomes the establishment last month of a new High-level Global Commission on NCDs.

I look forward to hearing the presentations from the esteemed panellists and the exchange with the audience as sharing good practices and innovative ideas is an important component in the concerted push to address the contributing risk factors for NCDs.

Please be assured of Jamaica’s commitment to playing its part in this regard.

Thank you.