



JAMAICA

STATEMENT BY

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**THIRD HIGH LEVEL MEETING OF THE UN GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE
PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES**

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Secretary-General,
Director General of the WHO,
Fellow delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen all

The burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) affects countries worldwide but with a growing trend in developing countries. As a small island developing state, Jamaica has been especially hard hit, with cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes and chronic respiratory disease, significant public health threats to the island's development.

The prevalence of NCDs is high among the population. Currently, 1 in 3 Jamaicans has hypertension and 1 in 8 has diabetes. In 2016, NCDs accounted for 12,577 or 68.4 per cent of all deaths (18,373) five years and older. Between 2010 and 2016, the number of deaths due to NCDs increased by 21.6% (from 10,344 in 2010 to 12,577 in 2016).

There is also a growing trend in the risk factors for NCDs. For example, 1 in 2 Jamaicans is currently overweight or obese, even as we have the hurdles of physical inactivity, smoking and alcohol consumption to scale.

The projected economic impact is significant. Losses associated with NCDs and mental health conditions are projected at US\$18.45 billion between 2015 and 2030.

We are compelled to stand and take notice of these numbers, particularly given the risk to our children and youth. Obesity in students 13-15 years old, for example, increased by 68.3% (from 6% in 2010 to 10.1% in 2017).

Still, we are encouraged by the progress of the last several years. Jamaica has set national targets for the NCD response and undertaken research to direct policy and programmes, as well as approved the *National Strategic and Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs in Jamaica 2013 – 2018*, with mental health, sickle cell disease, and violence and injuries addressed in the plan.

The Public Health Act (Tobacco Control Regulations 2013) took effect in July 2013 and saw the implementation of smoke-free legislation and graphic health warnings for tobacco. A national communication campaign was implemented while steps were taken to enhance enforcement of existing regulations. Jamaica also approved the development of a Comprehensive Tobacco Control Bill, in compliance with our obligations under the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

A National Food Industry Taskforce was launched to address product reformulation, food labelling and marketing, and communication and advocacy – all in support of Jamaica's obesity prevention efforts. In addition, the *National Food-based*

Dietary Guidelines, Physical Activity Guide and Toolkit for the Workplace Guidelines, and Physical Activity Guide for Healthcare Workers have been introduced.

Jamaica, Mr. President, has also seen and can testify to what is possible through cooperation and partnerships, in the public health interest.

In 2017, the *Jamaica Moves* campaign was launched, with a focus on prevention through the promotion of physical activity, healthy eating and age-appropriate health checks. The programme is now being implemented in schools, workplaces and community settings.

Our Ministry of Health and our Ministry of Education, Youth and Information are collaborating on the development and implementation of a National School Nutrition Policy, as well as a plan to promote healthy lifestyle and increase physical activity in schools through the *Jamaica Moves in Schools* campaign.

Through partnership with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Information and multi-stakeholder engagement, including discussions with manufacturing and marketing companies, sugar-sweetened beverages will be restricted in schools as at January 2019.

The Government is also collaborating with Vital Strategies and the Heart Foundation of Jamaica on the implementation of the Bloomberg Global Obesity Prevention Project, including the media campaign on “Sugar-Sweetened Beverages and Obesity”.

We have, too, made strides to strengthen our health systems to address NCDs through improved screening programmes in primary care and removing barriers to access in health care facilities. Jamaica has also introduced the HPV vaccine for girls entering high school, and opened two National Cancer Treatment Centres at the Cornwall Regional and St. Joseph’s hospitals.

Further, we have established a Mental Health and Homelessness Taskforce to recommend policies and programmes that will promote the mental health, social well-being and productivity of the Jamaican people, and have already started to implement some of the recommendations.

Mr. President, Jamaica has made tremendous inroads in its efforts to combat NCDs. Although we still have some way to go, we believe ourselves equal to the task, energised by the spirit of collaboration and collective commitment from the international community.

Thank You.