
***CARIBBEAN CIVIL SOCIETY BRIDGETOWN
DECLARATION: TACKLING THE CARIBBEAN EPIDEMIC
OF CHRONIC DISEASES.***

We, the undersigned representatives of Caribbean Civil Society and related organizations, on the occasion of a special Caribbean Civil Society led conference titled "**Healthy Caribbean 2008 – a wellness revolution conference**", held on the 16-18 October, 2008, at Bridgetown, Barbados;

Recognizing that chronic non-communicable diseases (CNCDs), which include heart diseases, stroke, diabetes, cancer, and lung diseases, are occurring in epidemic proportions in all countries of the region, resulting in the majority of ill health, suffering and premature death, producing excessive financial and personal burden on the people of the region, and requiring urgent, comprehensive intervention;

Aware that the above situation has occurred as a result of the increase in several common risk factors for CNCDs in the region, and an inadequate societal response to risk factor management, screening, prevention of these conditions, and treatment of persons already affected;

Recognizing that prevention of disease and promotion of good health are both affordable and effective and would prevent much suffering for the people of the Caribbean;

Mindful of the fact that CNCDs may be prevented and even reversed in an environment supportive of healthy lifestyles, based on regular physical activity, healthy eating and weight control, avoidance of alcohol abuse, tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke;

Conscious that healthy living, which prevents or delays the development of the CNCDs, requires the independent and collaborative efforts and contributions of all sectors of society including corporate and civil society, the private sector, policy makers, community planners, educators, media, health care providers and administrator, among others;

Aware that there is substantial scientific evidence regarding the magnitude of the CNCD problem, its causes and solutions to inform our actions to reduce risk factors for CNCDs and improve the management of these diseases throughout the age

spectrum.

Acknowledging that many circumstances of daily living provide opportunities to pursue healthy living including workplace, school, places of worship, the community and the home;

Sensitive to the fact that civil society has at its disposal a variety of useful tools to mobilize society and drive change, such as advocacy, coalition building, service delivery programs, and resource mobilization that can be applied effectively to address the CNCDS epidemic;

Noting that civil society organizations have a strong record of providing services and public education, and have traditional linkages with people in the community that can be harnessed to effect behavior change; and

Recognizing the significant leadership given by the Heads of Government of CARICOM countries as demonstrated at the Port-of-Spain Summit on CNCDS in September 2007 and the Summit Declaration "Uniting to Stop the Epidemic of Chronic Non-communicable Diseases," which recognized the role of civil society, private sector, and other social actors and international partners.

We declare our commitment to contribute actively, at the personal, family, organization, community, national, regional and global levels, to avoid, delay and reverse the further development of CNCDS through the following:

1. Support fully the CARICOM Heads of Government Declaration of Port-of-Spain: "Uniting to stop the epidemic of CNCDS";
2. Establish a Caribbean Civil Society coalition for tackling CNCDS in the areas of advocacy and coalition building, public education and media campaigns, provision of services, and monitoring and evaluation, before, or as soon as possible after the 31st December 2008; support existing country level networks/coalitions where they exist, and promote their development by June 2009, where they do not; and encourage the establishment of National Commissions for Chronic Non Communicable Diseases in all countries of the Caribbean;
3. Advocate for and participate actively in partnerships between civil society, government and the business/corporate sector in developing and implementing strategies for preventing and managing CNCDS nationally and regionally;
4. Advocate for policies and strategic targeted programs to prevent and control CNCDS and risk factors, mindful of gender, youth and issues affecting the elderly;
5. Promote physical activity through population based actions and policy change to create environments that facilitate physical activity among all sectors of the population, including effective spatial planning and design, guidelines, daily school physical education, workplace programs, among others;
6. Promote healthier diets by encouraging the availability of affordable and nutritious foods, preferably locally grown, banning trans fats, reducing salt, harmful fats and sugar in Caribbean diets, establishing regional standards for food labeling and services, encouraging breast feeding, and protecting children and society's other vulnerable groups, through legislative, educational, health promotional and other measures;
7. Seek the full implementation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco

Control (FCTC), following the recommendations of the Conferences of the Parties, in those countries that have ratified this treaty, and support ratification in those that have not;

8. Promote reduction in harmful alcohol use through updated legislation, policy change and user awareness campaigns;
9. Foster and lead sustained and well-targeted Caribbean wide public education and media campaigns ,including annual Caribbean Wellness Day, to promote prevention, screening and treatment of CNCDS,
10. Strengthen screening, early diagnosis, counseling, treatment, and care for people living with CNCDS and their families, and support development of such initiatives where they do not exist, considering the need to provide continuing health education to health professionals and de-medicalizing healthcare and education where appropriate;
11. Hold governments accountable for implementing the Port of Spain Declaration by encouraging and publicizing the monitoring and evaluation of efforts and results towards the prevention and control of CNCDS as well as promoting collaboration on risk factor surveillance and other research approaches; and
12. Commit to continued recruitment of civil society signatory organizations to this Declaration in an effort to enhance its implementation, strengthening the efficacy of individual member organizations, and hosting a biennial meeting to monitor and carry forward commitments made in this declaration.

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