

**Statement for the NCD Panel Non communicable Diseases:
Recent Developments and the Way Forward**

**By Professor Jean Claude Mbanya
President International Diabetes Federation
Tuesday 18 May 2010**

Minister Ramsammy, Dr Alwan, Dr Swartlander, ladies and gentlemen

It is indeed a pleasure to be here with you, just five days after the historic vote in the United Nations to hold a Summit on Non communicable Diseases in September next year.

Speaking on behalf of the alliance of the four NCD federations supporting this event today, I can say we are delighted at this outcome. We did not predict that the NCD Summit proposal would receive such overwhelming political support. We have yet to see the final list of countries that cosponsored the Resolution but we understand it numbers around 140. UN member governments have signalled loud and clear that the global epidemic of NCDs needs urgent, high level action.

From the civil society perspective, the last year has seen remarkable momentum on NCDs. Minister Ramsammy was for many years a lone voice arguing for urgent action to address NCDs. His concern was taken up energetically by the CARICOM member states at head of government level last summer and we pay tribute to the drive and skill of the Caribbean small island states. Some larger and more powerful countries could learn lessons from the Caribbean on influencing the global agenda. I must pay particular tribute to Caribbean Elder statesman, Sir George Alleyne, who worked

tirelessly and persuasively to achieve the NCD Summit, and to Dr Karen Sealy, WHO, who played a critical role in New York. The NCD Summit had many other champions in governments, international organisations and civil society and I thank you, even if I have not mentioned you by name.

I am speaking today wearing two hats

- as President of the International Diabetes Federation
- and as the representative of the alliance of NCD federations.

I speak with pride from both positions.

The International Diabetes Federation joined together last year with our sister federations—the World Heart Federation and the International Union Against Cancer—to call for a United Nations Summit on non-communicable diseases. More recently, the alliance was joined by a fourth federation, the International Union Against TB and Lung Disease. Together, the four federations represent 880 national member associations in over 170 countries—now that, ladies and gentlemen, really is ‘people power’.

We formed the alliance because we knew we would be louder speaking with one voice. And that has proved to be the case. As federations we have the legitimacy of a membership base and can ground our global advocacy in the reality of our members at national level.

We have shown over the last 12 months that we can mobilise the members of our federations to work together to lobby their governments. Ministers and civil servants take notice when they receive a letter or a delegation from diabetes, cancer, heart and respiratory organisations working together.

I am grateful to the founding partners of the NCD Alliance – the World Heart Federation International Union Against Cancer – for their flexibility and friendship. I am also pleased to note that in the last few months we have worked with a wider NGO NCD coalition, including organisations such as the Framework Convention Alliance and the Global Alliance Against Chronic Respiratory Diseases. It has been gratifying to see such global NGO solidarity building around NCDs.

The four major NCDs – diabetes, cancers, cardiovascular and chronic respiratory diseases – have common risk factors and need common approaches. We formed an NCD alliance because it makes no sense for us to focus on our own diseases and not see the connections between them, or the connections between NCDs and infectious diseases. Our approach has been to support the integration of NCDs particularly at primary health care level. We see NCDs as a health systems issue. Indeed, we believe that a focus on NCDs will strengthen health systems generally and lead to improvements that will also benefit people with infectious diseases and other conditions. We want a new approach to health which focuses on well being, health literacy and prevention, as well as early diagnosis and treatment.

The NCD alliance has been pleased, over the last 6 months, to support the WHO's NCDNet. We are grateful to Dr Alwan and Janet Voute particularly for bringing together a wider coalition, including governments, around NCDs. NCDNet will be an important vehicle for convening different constituencies in the lead up to next year's Summit. We hope it will be possible to go beyond existing partners and start a dialogue with partners from other critical sectors, including food and beverages. The NCD Summit gives us an opportunity to have a global conversation around the way we live, our concept of development, how we grow and market food, how we design our

cities, and many more factors that drive the global NCD epidemic. So we will be pleased to continue our collaboration with NCDNet and see it as an important forum going forward.

We also support implementation of the WHO's Non-communicable Diseases Action Plan, which recognizes NCDs as a development issue. One of the enduring myths about NCDs is that they are diseases of the rich and elderly. That is not the case. We know that the economic, social and human burden of the NCD epidemic has already shifted to low- and middle-income countries and threatens to overwhelm already vulnerable health systems. We also know that social inequality is linked to a concentration of NCDs amongst the poor and marginalised in some of the wealthiest countries of the world. Addressing the social determinants of health will be key to making progress.

Going forward, we want the September 2010 Review of the UN Millennium Development Goals, to acknowledge the linkages between the NCDs and the MDGs. We also want to ensure that the NCDs will be central to the successor goals when the MDGs end in 2015.

As an alliance we will be working with our members to understand the outcomes they want from the unique opportunity presented by next year's NCD Summit. We want a platform of very concrete outcomes to give us a clear roadmap for the future and enable us to measure progress.

One essential outcome from the Summit must be increased funding for essential NCD medicines, technologies and care. Of the US\$22 billion currently spent on health by international aid agencies in low and middle income countries, less than 1% is spent on NCDs which form more than

60% of the disease burden. That has to change. WHO estimates that 8 million people die prematurely in low and middle income countries from NCDs every year. We can and must stop that needless loss of life.

We have a busy 18 months ahead of us in the lead up to the NCD Summit but we are not shy of hard work. The NCD alliance will work with partners in all sectors to ensure that next year's NCD Summit is more than just a talking shop and delivers real change for the people we serve.

Thank you