

## United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Non-Communicable Diseases

FCA believes that integrating the prevention of non-communicable diseases (cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic respiratory disease and diabetes) and the risk factors that cause them (including, most importantly, tobacco use) into the global health and development agendas is not only achievable but also a priority for developing countries.

A recent survey by the Centre for Global Development in Washington showed that only 0.9% of the US\$22 billion spent on health by international aid agencies in low- and middle-income countries is spent on preventing or controlling NCDs, despite NCDs forming 60% of the burden of disease in those countries and threatening to undo development gains made over the last decade.

At the World Health Assembly in May 2009, a joint campaign was launched by leading NGOs involved in the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) calling for:

- A United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Non-Communicable Disease (NCD UNGASS)
- NCD indicators – including one on tobacco use – to be agreed at the Millennium Development Goals Review Summit in September 2010.

This was followed by a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Trinidad and Tobago in November issuing a special statement on NCDs that included a call for an UNGASS. The Commonwealth comprises a diverse group of 54 countries spanning five continents, representing one-third of the world's people and one-quarter of member states in the United Nations.

Momentum for the UNGASS has been building quickly over recent weeks following a briefing for UN Ambassadors held in New York on 5 February hosted by the Caribbean Community Secretariat (CARICOM), at which they announced their intention to introduce a United Nations General Assembly resolution asking member states to support an UNGASS on NCDs.

FCA joined a meeting of global alliances<sup>1</sup> and other leading NGOs in Geneva on 25 February and agreed to back a joint advocacy campaign to build the necessary support for these goals.

### **Mobilizing support for the NCD UNGASS**

CARICOM Ambassadors in New York have started official negotiations with other UN member states on the draft UNGASS resolution. Negotiations are expected to take 2-3 weeks and a final vote on the resolution could take place between mid-April and the beginning of May.

Intense lobbying is needed at national level over the coming weeks to ensure a high level of awareness and support amongst governments.

For a successful vote on the UNGASS resolution, we need national civil society advocates to secure the support of their national delegations to the UN in New York, either directly through their country's UN Ambassador, or indirectly through their Head of State, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Minister of Health, and other key national government contacts. The support of Ministers of Foreign Affairs is particularly essential given that UN Ambassadors report to them.

**Please adapt and send the attached letter with the resolution to your Head of State as soon as possible.**

<sup>1</sup> Including International Union Against Cancer (UICC), World Heart Federation (WHF), Global Alliance against Chronic Respiratory Diseases (GARD) and International Diabetes Federation (IDF), which kindly provided this briefing material. The International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (the Union) has also joined this campaign.

**Upcoming General Assembly Resolution on a United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Non-Communicable Diseases**

Dear Prime Minister/President

We are writing to seek your support for a draft resolution (attached) that will be tabled at the United Nations General Assembly in several weeks by CARICOM member states requesting the General Assembly to hold a United Nations Special Session on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) in September 2011.

This resolution follows a statement issued by 54 Commonwealth Heads of State calling for “a Summit on NCDs to be held in September 2011, under the auspices of the United Nations General Assembly, in order to develop strategic responses to these diseases and their repercussions”.

As an organisation committed to reducing tobacco use in our country, we understand only too well the devastating impact of the diseases that it causes or gravely exacerbates: cancer, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease and diabetes. These non-communicable diseases are a growing epidemic and cause 60% of all deaths globally, with 80% of those deaths occurring in low- and middle-income countries.

It is time to act. With your leadership, we can work together to prevent premature deaths and reverse the damaging social and economic effects of these diseases. Your support for a United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Non-Communicable Diseases would be greatly valued by public health advocates in this country and globally.

We look forward to hearing from you concerning the Government’s intentions regarding this very important issue.

Yours sincerely,

cc:

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Minister of Health

UN Ambassador