

19 September 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Caricom Taking Stock**

Honourable Prime Ministers, Honourable Ministers, distinguished delegations, ladies and gentlemen,

First, let me thank CARICOM for organizing and hosting this side event.

I would like to begin by saying that NCDs have many faces but very few voices. That is, until this morning, when the General Assembly adopted the Political Declaration on the Prevention and Control of NCDs.

And that is why I am so grateful that the Caribbean countries have taken such a strong leadership role in giving a voice to the challenges faced by the millions of people with NCDs living in low and middle income countries around the world. I want to pay tribute to CARICOM particularly for ensuring that the response to NCDs has now been placed at the forefront of global efforts to eradicate poverty and to improve health.

Your agenda has been ambitious and courageous. I might even say daring, especially at a time when many countries in your region have been suffering from a double burden of disease.

With work in collaboration with other countries in early 2010 towards a resolution on a High-level Meeting on NCDs, you were aiming at nothing less than a full scale revival of the public health agenda in the Caribbean region and beyond.

You were aiming to raise the priority of NCDs within the United Nations to support countries as they tackle some extremely complex challenges: the globalization of unhealthy lifestyles spreads with a stunning sweep and speed, populations age, health costs soar, and the economic downturn deepens.

Today's adoption of the Political Declaration on the Prevention and Control of NCDs shows the result of your outstanding work over the past 18 months. The dedication and hard work your countries and other Member States gave during negotiations deserves great appreciation.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Today and tomorrow's High-level Meeting on NCDs is a wake up call, not only for public health, but for Heads of State and Government.

These are the diseases that break the bank. A recent World Economic and Harvard study estimates that, over the next 20 years, non-communicable diseases will cost the economy in low and middle income countries more than US \$7 trillion. Left unchecked, these costly diseases have the power to devour the benefit of economic gains, keeping millions of people below the poverty line.

On the other hand, WHO estimates that the price tag for scaled up implementation of a core set of "best buy" intervention strategies are estimated to cost US\$2 billion per year for all low and middle income countries. That is, less than US 40 cents per person. This price should be affordable to most countries and the reward in terms of lives saved, suffering prevented, and costs averted will be enormous.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me conclude by inviting you to continue the struggle against NCDs. We have a very busy and promising agenda, implementing the political declaration and I am confident you will have a major role to play in the coming months and years. Thank you for giving the world some much needed vision and encouragement.

And thank you, Prime Ministers and Ministers in this region, for your unwavering commitment.

This is how the world can promote development.

Thank you.