



On the occasion of the Seventy-Second Regular Session of the
United Nations General Assembly

**The Permanent Mission of Barbados to the UN, The Permanent Mission of Canada to the UN,
The Caribbean Community (CARICOM),¹ The Pacific Island States (PSIDS),² the World Health
Organization (WHO) and the Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC)**

invite

Heads of Delegations, Permanent Representatives and Experts

to attend

Childhood Obesity – A Development Time-bomb: Learning from SIDS to accelerate multi-sectoral action in support of the 2025 NCDs targets and the SDGs

Friday 22 September, 2017, 1.15 to 2.30 p.m. Trusteeship Council Chamber

The Caribbean and Pacific small island developing States (SIDS) are sub-regions of the world with particularly high burdens of obesity and non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which threaten the achievement of sustainable development in these already vulnerable countries. Obesity is a disease in its own right, but it is also a major risk factor for many of the NCDs, and there is growing concern, specifically, about the alarming rate at which childhood obesity is increasing. Caribbean and Pacific SIDS have been focusing on this issue at the highest level. This Side Event will provide an opportunity to share the experiences of these regions, and others, in providing an enabling and less obesogenic environment for their people, especially the children.

Speakers will include:

- ❖ **Senator The Honourable Maxine McClean, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Barbados.**
- ❖ **Senator The Honourable Kamina Johnson Smith, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Foreign Trade, Jamaica.**
- ❖ **The Honourable Elvin Nimrod, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Grenada.**
- ❖ **The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Canada.**
- ❖ **Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus, Director General, WHO.**
- ❖ **Dr Colin Tukuitonga, Director General, Secretariat of the Pacific Community.**
- ❖ **Sir George Alleyne, Director Emeritus, PAHO/WHO.**
- ❖ **Sir Trevor Hassell, President, Healthy Caribbean Coalition.**

Please RSVP to Lynda Waithe, Permanent Mission of Barbados to the United Nations at
prun@foreign.gov.bb or 212 551 4305

¹ Antigua and Barbuda, Bahamas, Barbados, Belize, Dominica, Grenada, Guyana, Haiti, Jamaica, Saint Lucia, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Suriname and Trinidad and Tobago.

² Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of), Nauru, Palau, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga and Vanuatu.

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Background

The Caribbean and Pacific small island developing States (SIDS), are sub-regions of the world with particularly high burdens of obesity and NCDs, and this threatens the achievement of sustainable development in these already vulnerable countries.

SIDS have been at the forefront of responding to NCDs as a development issue, and ensuring their inclusion in various development agenda. In 2007, CARICOM held the first-ever Heads of Government Summit on NCDs, and issued the **Port of Spain Declaration: “Uniting to stop the epidemic of NCDs.”** This Summit served as a catalyst for the UN process that led to the **Political Declaration of the UN High Level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of NCDs**, in 2011. Subsequently in 2014, NCDs were recognized as a major challenge for SIDS in the **SAMOA (SIDS Accelerated Modalities of Action) Pathway**, and addressing NCDs has been identified as one of the global health challenges within the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**.

Furthermore, in May 2017, the 70th World Health Assembly adopted a decision welcoming the implementation plan of the **WHO Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity**, which provides guidance for further implementing the recommendations included in the report of the Commission,³ for governments and other stakeholders, aimed at reversing the rising trend of children and adolescents becoming overweight and obese. The final decision urged Member States to develop national responses, strategies and plans to end infant, child and adolescent obesity, taking into account the implementation plan.

Concept

The Pacific and Caribbean regions comprise 14 of the 25 most obese countries in the world, with Pacific Islands making up the top 5 - ranging from Palau, with 47% prevalent obesity, to Antigua and Barbuda, at 31%. The Caribbean Public Health Agency (CARPHA) reports that at least one in every five children in the Caribbean is carrying unhealthy weight, and in many of its member Countries, childhood obesity, as measured by Global School Health Surveys is high. In the Caribbean, obesity rates range from 4.1 – 20.1%; in the Pacific, obesity rates range from 0.4% in Vanuatu, to 21.1% in Tonga, closely followed by Samoa at 19.3%. Overall overweight and obesity prevalence ranges from 12.0% - 58.7%.

However, countries in these regions have not been idle, as they have been focusing on this issue at the highest level. At the end of the Pacific NCD Summit, held in Tonga in June 2016, Heads of Pacific Island Governments, Ministers of Health and Pacific Health leaders called on governments and development partners to invest resources to address NCDs, and highlighted the importance of taking action to curb the problem of childhood obesity as a priority.

³ http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/204176/1/9789241510066_eng.pdf?ua=1

More recently in Grenada in July 2017, CARICOM Heads of Government, having benefitted from a formal evaluation of the POS NCD Summit Declaration, recognised that the Community had not implemented the Declaration sufficiently, and recommitted themselves to the promotion of healthy lifestyles, to combat the epidemic of NCDs. The CARICOM Heads highlighted their concern that obesity in children represented a great threat to the health of future generations in the region. CARPHA, in wide collaboration with multi-sectoral stakeholders, has developed a regional 6-point policy package for addressing childhood obesity, which builds on the PAHO Plan of Action for the Prevention of Obesity in Children and Adolescents (2014-2019), and provides a context for the HCC Civil Society Action Plan for the Prevention of Childhood Obesity (2017-2021).

The regions of the Caribbean and the Pacific have common challenges directly and indirectly fueling the obesity epidemic, including cultural norms and practices; economic drivers; obesogenic policy environments, and heavy reliance on imported foods. The latter is just one of the issues that SIDS' Governments must address in order to reduce the obesogenic environment in which children live.

On the occasion of seventy-second regular session of the United Nations General Assembly, this Side Event will provide an opportunity to share the experiences of CARICOM and Pacific Island SIDS in scaling up activity, policies and programmes for providing an enabling and less obesogenic environment for their people, especially the children. Discussions and outcomes of the event will contribute to accelerating the progress made in fulfilling existing commitments to address obesity and NCDs, including via the WHO Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs, the Comprehensive Implementation Plan for Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition, the Decade of Action on Nutrition, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, and the upcoming Third UN High-level Meeting on NCDs, in 2018.

A panel of high-level policy makers and experts will discuss the current landscape, challenges, successes, lessons learned and priorities in seeking to reduce obesity, particularly in children. The panelists will also highlight how countries have implemented multi-actor, multi-sectoral cooperation and partnership responses needed in addressing obesity, and NCDs in general.

Note this event will also be webcast on the UNTV website at <http://webtv.un.org>

This side event is hosted by the Permanent Missions of Barbados and Canada to the UN, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM), the Pacific Island States (PSIDS), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the Healthy Caribbean Coalition (HCC).