



2009 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

Joint Statement by the International Diabetes Federation, International Union Against Cancer and World Heart Federation

The International Diabetes Federation, International Union Against Cancer and the World Heart Federation urge Commonwealth members and participants of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting to acknowledge the rising burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). Regarded by many as the global health tsunami, threatening the economic and social development of many Commonwealth countries, NCDs need to become a worldwide health priority. The Meeting will take place in the Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago from 27–29 November. Our organizations appeal to the Heads of Government at the meeting to issue a call for NCD indicators to be accepted at the 2010 Millennium Development Goals Review Summit, taking place at the United Nations General Assembly in September 2010.

NCDs, which include cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer and chronic respiratory disease, cause 60% of all deaths globally, 80% of which are in low- and middle-income countries. The World Health Organization projects that global deaths will continue to rise over the next 10 years, with the African region expected to see the highest relative increase (27%). The International Diabetes Federation, International Union Against Cancer and World Heart Federation call on the Commonwealth Heads of Government to pay attention to this rising epidemic. The Commonwealth, as a voluntary association of 53 member states covering five continents, is well placed to raise this critical global health issue.

The Millennium Development Goals have stated that health is critical to the economic, political and social development of all countries, yet they contain no goals or targets for NCDs, the largest burden of disease in low- income countries.

We also call on Heads of Government to support a United Nations General Assembly Special Session on NCDs and to ensure the availability of essential medicines for people living with NCDs in low- and middle- income countries.

The social and economic burden these diseases are placing on countries that are least equipped to deal with them can no longer be ignored. Our three organizations together represent over 780 member organizations in more than 170 countries. We are joining forces in this unique collaboration to create a powerful voice for change.

Integrating the prevention of NCDs into the national and global development agendas is not only achievable but also a priority for developing countries. Now is the time for action.