



## **COMMONWEALTH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION**

### **Communique issued at the end of the 3-Day conference on Non-Communicable Diseases: Diabetes, Obesity, and Healthy Living**

The Commonwealth Medical Association (CMA), led by its General Secretary Dr. Oheneba Owusu-Danso, has held a 3-day conference on non-communicable diseases (NCD's) on December 15-17, 2011 at the Sarova Panafric Hotel in Nairobi, Kenya. The conference hosted by the Kenya Medical Association had representations from 12 national medical association's (NMAs) in the commonwealth namely; Bangladesh, Cameroon, Ghana, India, Kenya, Malta, Rwanda, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Tanzania, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uganda. It was also attended by other stakeholders.

The Conference acknowledged the challenges faced by Commonwealth member states as a result of Non-Communicable Disease's NCDs. The four major NCD's were noted as Diabetes Mellitus, Cardiovascular diseases, Cancer and Chronic Respiratory Diseases.

Whereas the major presentations focused primarily on diabetes, the follow up workshop and discussions centered also on important issues on Obesity, Physical inactivity, Nutrition and poor eating habits, as well as Alcohol and Tobacco abuse.

In an address the general secretary of CMA, Dr Oheneba Owusu-Danso, called on doctors and other professionals to develop strategies in leading their populations to adopt effective solutions on such important global health issue as non-communicable diseases. He called on professional organisations to be very much involved in the policy making processes and make crucial input into the development agenda of their countries, the Commonwealth and the world at large. He paid glowing tribute to the major sponsors of the conference, the Commonwealth Secretariat and Commonwealth Foundation as well as other sponsors from within Kenya namely Sanofi Aventis, Sanofi Pasteur, Chase Bank, Crown Healthcare, Chem-Labs Ltd and Lords Healthcare.

The Kenyan Assistant Minister of Public Health and Sanitation, Hon Beth W Mugo MP who opened the conference highlighted on the commonality and the gravity of the problem of NCD's amongst member commonwealth states. He stated that it was for this reason that commonwealth states resolved at their 2011 meeting in Perth, Australia to focus more attention on NCD related issues in their countries. He charged NMAs to collaborate effectively with their respective governments in addressing the danger of NCDs.

In a keynote address by a renowned endocrinologist, Professor Chandrika Wijeyaratne of Sri Lanka , she emphasized that the growing epidemic of NCD's requires the highest level of attention with multi-sectoral participation, using cost effective public health interventions.

All speakers emphasized the major point from the Health Section of the Commonwealth Secretariat, that the impact of NCD's has been, until lately, overshadowed by the focus on Communicable Diseases (CD's). The burden of disease resulting from NCD's is estimated to be greater than the combined burden of HIV, TB and Malaria. It is projected, that by 2030, more than 476 million persons will be affected by NCD's. Already, more than 60% of deaths in the Commonwealth are as a result of NCD related illnesses. The impact of this on national economies, as it relates to achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG's), can in no way be ignored. It is therefore vitally important that both CD's and NCD's be given equal and priority attention in the response to these threats.

On the foregoing, the following recommendations were made by the conference. That

- the adage 'prevention is better than cure' must be given more practical meaning by focusing a greater attention on healthy lifestyle practices. The conference called for a more effective shift in national public health policies in the commonwealth to include appropriate nutrition, regular physical activity, and control of tobacco and alcohol consumption.
- the Commonwealth states should prioritize research and data collection in order to adhere to evidence based solutions to the serious challenges and economic and health threats due to non-communicable diseases.
- all member states are encouraged to implement conventions and declarations agreed upon by previous high level meetings including the World Health Organization, Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, Commonwealth Minister's Meeting and the United Nations General Assembly, especially those to which they are signatories.
- the National Medical Associations are charged to collaborate with Governments, policy makers and other stakeholders to achieving these goals.

The conference pledged the commitment of the Commonwealth Medical Association in building continuous capacity of the National Medical Associations in their pursuit of advocacy and other relevant strategies in combating these health challenges towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

SIGNED BY

DR OHENEBA OWUSU-DANSO

GENERAL SECRETARY, COMMONWEALTH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

DECEMBER 18, 2011 NAIROBI, KENYA