

**THE ARUBA DECLARATION (A CALL FOR CONCERTED ACTION) ON
OBESITY**
with special attention to childhood obesity

We, the participants of the Pan American Conference on Obesity with special attention to childhood obesity held in Aruba from June 8 – 11, 2011,

- Recognizing that the growing obesity epidemic needed to be addressed, as data conclude that obesity prevalence in the Americas has increased and in some cases doubled, affecting all ages, cultures, genders and especially children;
- Recognizing that being overweight or obese during childhood has both immediate and long-term health outcomes. Increasingly, obese children diagnosed with a range of health conditions previously seen almost exclusively among adults, including high cholesterol, high blood pressure, Type 2 diabetes, sleep apnea and joint problems. Moreover, being overweight or obese in childhood significantly increases the likelihood of being overweight or obese in adolescence and adulthood, which is very hard to reverse. Early prevention and priority to address childhood obesity is of critical importance;
- Considering that, under the auspices of the Ministry of Health of Aruba, a group consisting of representatives of international organizations and scientific experts working on the fight against obesity, and the promotion of healthy weights met in Oranjestad, Aruba from January 26-29, 2011 with the goal to discuss the current situation regarding the global obesity epidemic, and to propose a concerted action plan;
- Noting that in recognition of the urgent need to address the obesity pandemic, the Minister of Health of Aruba initiated the Pan American Conference on Obesity with special attention to childhood obesity, held from June 8 – 11, 2011, in Oranjestad, Aruba, providing an opportunity to discuss the challenges of promoting healthy lifestyles and reducing childhood obesity and the related health issues, and to exchange effective strategies in the fight against obesity, especially in childhood;
- Recognizing that obesity has multiple complex causes associated with behaviors such as unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, as well as social determinants such as poverty, low education, limited breastfeeding, cultural norms and lifestyle influences, and therefore requires multi-sectoral, multi-level action;
- Noting that obesity-associated NCDs have direct negative economic impacts including rising health care costs, and reduced labor productivity, and thereby impede economic development of all affected countries;
- Taking due account that children are important for the development of a country, hence investments in health promotion and obesity prevention, with special regard to children, are essential keys for social and economic development;
- Considering the strategies and actions presented in the “WHITE PAPER” entitled **“PREVENTING OBESITY IN THE AMERICAS: A CALL FOR CONCERTED ACTION”** during the Conference, and concluding that a coherent, consistent message should be given globally emphasizing a comprehensive approach based on the white paper’s three principles: a) that primordial and primary prevention with a life course approach should be the central component of national programs to stop the obesity epidemic, b) that the multi-level focus should be working across all sectors to modify the ‘obesogenic’ environment that facilitates a positive energy balance and excess weight gain, and c) developing self care skills, meaning actions taken by the individual to protect and promote their health and the health of their

children. At the same time, it is acknowledged that the 'obesogenic' environment shows wide variability across countries, and therefore any concerted regional action plan must allow for flexibility and adaptation to each local situation.

Therefore, We, the participants of the Pan American Conference on Obesity with special attention to Childhood Obesity declare that it is necessary:

- To commit to the fight against childhood obesity by endorsing the "WHITE PAPER" entitled "**PREVENTING OBESITY IN THE AMERICAS: A CALL FOR CONCERTED ACTION**" by sharing the WHITE PAPER's strategies and actions contained with our respective governments, institutions and communities; and then promoting those strategies that are consistent with national circumstances.
- To support effective public policies and multi-level, comprehensive strategies to address obesity, based on the WHITE PAPER's three principles: a) that primordial and primary prevention with a life course approach should be the central component of national programs to stop the obesity epidemic, b) that the multi-level focus should be working across all sectors to modify the 'obesogenic' environment that facilitates a positive energy balance and excess weight gain, and c) developing self care skills, meaning actions taken by the individual to protect and promote their health and the health of their children. At the same time, it is acknowledged that the 'obesogenic' environment shows wide variability across countries, and therefore any concerted regional action plan must allow for flexibility and adaptation to each local situation.
- To incorporate the collection of obesity data into chronic disease surveillance systems in our respective countries and monitor, measure and evaluate the progress made to reduce the prevalence of obesity.
- To foster collaboration and knowledge sharing on health promotion and obesity prevention among governments, nongovernmental organizations, educational institutions and the private sector.
- To facilitate accumulation and exchange of knowledge on which projects and strategies have proved effective and in which settings, through an alliance of collaborators that provide mutual assistance within and among the countries.
- To raise awareness on all levels in the community about the determinants of obesity across the lifespan, using consistent and actionable messages.
- To raise awareness that obesity has a significant impact on labor productivity, and therefore on the social and economic development of countries, and that investment in health promotion to prevent and reduce obesity supports personal and national economic growth.
- To create, promote or strengthen as appropriate, supportive environments to benefit the community, facilitating access to education, physical activity and information, to support healthy choices, empowering the individual to make better decisions and healthy food choices.
- To promote access to healthy and affordable food options that are consistent with cultural and environmental factors, providing people with the opportunity to make healthy choices by, inter alia, working with manufacturers and retailers to produce and serve healthy food options, and by implementing programmatic nutrition standards and organizational policies to limit access to less healthy foods, such as food procurement policies in schools, early learning centers, worksites and hospitals.
- To implement necessary policies to support health promotion and physical activity and evaluate measures to help people recognize and make healthy food and beverage choices utilizing strategies such as menu labeling and restricted marketing

of unhealthy foods and beverages to children through any means, including children's programs and sports.

- To implement a system to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness and impact of the strategies implemented, and assess the progress made in reducing obesity and increasing the labor productivity.
- To develop a system to evaluate and monitor the impact of obesity on the social and economic development, such as on labor productivity and health care costs.
- To submit and present this declaration with the "WHITE PAPER" entitled "**PREVENTING OBESITY IN THE AMERICAS: A CALL FOR CONCERTED ACTION**" at the Global Summit on Non-Communicable Diseases of the General Assembly of Heads of State and Government, to be held in New York in September 2011.

The original of the present Declaration, of which the English and Spanish texts are equally authentic, shall be deposited at
