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STATEMENT BY

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on behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands

High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases

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Excellencies, honorable colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, it is my great honor and privilege to speak on behalf of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, comprising the Netherlands and The Caribbean islands of Sint Maarten, Curacao and Aruba.

The NCD prevalence varies throughout the Kingdom and we have seen an overall increase of our people with diabetes and people with one or a combination of chronic conditions.

In our new policy document of the Netherlands of May 2011, we focus on three themes: a) trust in health protection, b) accessibility and availability of health care and sports in the neighborhoods and c) educating people to decide on their own lifestyles.

Choices for a healthy lifestyle can be made through accessible and reliable information together with working public and private partnerships. We give specific attention to young children and youth, but we are not in favor of nationwide campaigns. In our experience they often lack focus on specific target groups and we have serious doubts regarding their effectiveness.

With regard to the children in the Caribbean islands, a specific focus has been given to Childhood Obesity due to the high prevalence in the region. I will come back to that later when describing **The Aruba Call for Action on Obesity**, with special attention to childhood obesity. It is of importance to focus on a healthy start for young people through empowerment, sports activities and accessible health care nearby.

Our responses to the NCD's are embedded in our health care systems with specific emphasis in primary health care and public health policies and programs. We tailor our programs to include a cost containment approach. In the areas of health systems and public health, we have financial growth in our programs. We are aware that people with chronic conditions are the main consumers of our health system.

In this respect, we also face challenges as the accumulation of NCD's comes face to face with the challenge of ageing and multiple morbidities. This comes as a major challenge for the health care systems in our countries according to our national policies and as indicated by the OECD. In the future a fast growing part of our population will face heart failure, diabetes, depression and overweight at the same time. Hence, we are not in favor of a more vertical approach for all separate diseases, but rather an integrated treatment with a cost containment approach in health care policies and systems of prevention, treatment and long term care.

It is important to monitor the prevalence of diseases and practical and accessible approaches. We however, do not favor globally decided –targets given the differences of prevalence in countries and the increases in NCD's. At the international level, we are aware that the burden of diseases in developing countries is growing. We do believe in the involvement of government approach. However, distinctions need to be made between policy aspects that fall within the responsibility of Ministries of Health

themselves, such as the sustainability of health care systems and health prevention programs, and between responsibilities of other ministries that may also have an impact on health.

With regard to assistance to low and middle income countries, the first priority is to create health care systems that can meet the challenges of NCD's both in preventive actions and in health care treatment. Financing through the strengthening of existing health care systems should be implemented in the framework of current mechanisms and we do not see the need for new partnerships.

Mr. Chairman we look at this political declaration as an inspiring document for national and local policies, since the majority of actions should be focused on that level. I have indicated to you that we are in favor of a pragmatic approach, given the differences of prevalence in the different countries. Given the cultural aspects of the four risk factors, a tailor made approach is necessary. A one-size-fits-all approach is of limited impact and value to our citizens.

Finally I would like to come back to the subject of obesity Mr Chairman. In Aruba, the Pan American Conference on Obesity was held from June 8th to 11th, 2011. A wide range of representatives including national, provincial and municipal government representatives; ministers, senators; minister's representatives, scientists, experts, journalists, and athletes from 22 countries of all the Americas took part in this Conference, that paid special attention to Childhood Obesity.

During the Conference, strategies that can be applied to prevent obesity in the Americas were identified and presented in **The Aruba Call for Action on Obesity**, with special attention to childhood obesity. In the context of this short intervention, MR. Chairman please allow me to highlight just a few actions that were proposed:

- To commit to the fight against childhood obesity and to promote healthy weight by sharing strategies and actions with and between our respective governments, institutions and communities; To support effective public policies and multi-level, comprehensive strategies to address obesity, based on the principles as described in the call for action.
- To facilitate accumulation and exchange of knowledge on which projects and strategies have proved effective and in which settings.
- To increase awareness that obesity has a significant impact on labor productivity, and therefore on the social and economic development of countries and to invest in health promotion to prevent and reduce obesity.
- To incorporate obesity data into chronic disease surveillance systems in member countries and to monitor, measure and evaluate progress made to reduce the prevalence of obesity and its associated risk factors.

Let me conclude Mr. Chairman, by saying that only history can judge us. We'd like to use the occasion on this High Level Meeting to not just sign another declaration, but to link it to the work at local and national levels, where action needs to be undertaken.