



**STATEMENT BY THE HON AKILAH BYRON-NISBETT, MINISTER OF HEALTH ET
AL., FEDERATION OF ST KITTS AND NEVIS**

Continuation of 73rd World Health Assembly, Geneva, Nov 9-14 2020

Mr. President

Director General,

Excellences, Heads of State and Government,

Honourable Ministers of Health,

Heads and members of delegation

I am pleased to address this august body at the continuation of the WHA to illustrate St. Kitts and Nevis' situation relative to the COVID-19. On March 25, 2020, the Federation recorded its first case of Covid-19. Our International Health Regulations (IHR) National Focal Point Committee was activated with the assistance of WHO and PAHO who were also extremely instrumental in guiding the development of a national COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness Response Plan. The plan served as a road map for response activities under (9) broad pillars with predetermined interventions. These include: capacity building for COVID-19 hotline workers; step- up utilization of WHO and PAHO's COVID-19 related products of videos infographics; launch of a national COVID-19 mobile application and training of personnel to scale up surveillance of in-bound international travelers and training of all frontline workers in the context of COVID-19. procure and install ICT equipment at ports of entry.

PAHO continues to partner with the MOH to establish increased country molecular PCR testing capability with specific training of lab personnel in COVID-19 molecular testing; strengthen IPC

capacity at all levels of the healthcare sector and stakeholder system such as civil aviation, hotel and tourism sectors.

As of November 9, 2020, the Federation has recorded only 19 COVID-19 cases, seven of whom were briefly hospitalized with no intensive care nor mechanical ventilation need, and all have completely recovered. This, we believe, is a remarkable achievement for the smallest developing state in the Western Hemisphere.

The Federation's achievement, relative to the containment and management of the virus can be attributed to its robust public health response which includes a well-oiled, national and health emergency coordinating mechanism with an all-sector approach and specific protocols enforced through relevant regulations. At this juncture, our borders have been re-opened and there is mandatory wearing of masks in public spaces, rigorous physical distancing and hand sanitizing, as well as a heightened education awareness campaign, as key strategies to contain the spread of the virus.

We applaud our illustrious Prime Minister, Dr. The Hon. Timothy Harris for his astute governance of our country and who also has been selected to represent the CARICOM region on the Task Force to facilitate the global initiative, "Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator. The Federation also commends the considerable cooperation and solidarity of Governments such as the Republic of China (Taiwan), India and the USA/USAID, Cuba for augmenting our health sector with specialist nurses and doctors from their Medical Brigade, as well as the tremendous support of entities such as the WHO/PAHO, CARICOM, OECS, CARPHA, EU and IAEA, who have contributed significantly to our success. The support of the Republic of Republic of China (Taiwan), in particular, has been immense, having provided St Kitts and Nevis with expert knowledge and guidance regarding the management of the Corona Virus through a multilateral videoconference with senior health officials and medical personnel and donated thousands of medical masks, infrared thermometers, ventilators, infrared thermal imaging cameras, rapid test kits and other supplies. In addition, Taiwan assisted with a critical, expert review of our National Pandemic Response Plan, given their country's success in handling the SARS epidemic of 2003. Taiwan's own success story in addressing the current Covid-19 pandemic should not go unnoticed by the global community, in particular, the United Nations member states, and the World Health Organization. At this juncture, Taiwan's containment of Covid-19 to just 573 confirmed cases, with minimal community spread, in a population of 23 million people illustrates there is much to

be learnt from the country's handling of the pandemic thus far. As has been done consistently over the years by our country, in this forum, we continue to make an appeal for the WHO to officially recognize Taiwan as a global development partner in health and technology.

The principle of "leaving no one behind" has been strongly embraced by the United Nations and the WHO. Let us reflect this principle through our actions and provide a seat at the table for all countries and regions. Let us also learn from each other, as we work towards mitigating the virus, protect lives, and developing a safe vaccine synchronously holding fast to the global imperative of respecting the rights of all persons and countries.

Condolences on behalf of the Government and people of St. Kitts and Nevis are extended to all families and countries, globally, who are experiencing distress emanating from the pandemic.

We urge all countries to 'buy-in' and participate in the COVAX Facility not only to generate the necessary financial resources for successful development but also to prevent further monumental loss of lives.

The Federation of St Kitts and Nevis also owes a debt of gratitude to its hardworking multi-sectorial teams for the many dedicated hours of work keeping our country safe throughout this unprecedented scourge.