

RESUMED SESSION OF THE SEVENTY-THIRD WORLD HEALTH
ASSEMBLY

WRITTEN STATEMENT BY

TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

**Agenda Item 11.4 Accelerating the elimination of cervical cancer as a
global public health problem**

Having reviewed the Draft Global Strategy Towards Eliminating Cervical Cancer as a Public Health Problem, Trinidad and Tobago takes this opportunity to present the following comments:

1. Trinidad and Tobago recognises the importance of a global strategy towards eliminating cervical cancer as a public health problem. We acknowledge that significant gaps and challenges persist in eliminating cervical cancer within our public health system, and that whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches at all levels of care are needed to overcome these barriers. In this regard, we have already implemented some initiatives that are aligned to the proposed strategic actions, including:
 - a. HPV vaccination of both boys and girls in primary schools since 2013;
 - b. Strengthening of cervical cancer screening:
 - i. The National Colposcopy Centre was established in 2017;
 - ii. Pap smears are offered at Family Planning Clinics in the primary care setting;
 - iii. Healthcare workers have been trained in evidence-based techniques for management of abnormal Pap smears, and referral pathways have been improved;
 - iv. Further, recognising that HPV testing is more effective than Pap smears in detecting women at risk for developing cervical cancer, and is more feasible in limited resource settings, Trinidad and Tobago introduced HPV DNA testing as a method of screening in the public health system in 2019. Implementation of HPV testing in all public health facilities is currently being planned.

- c. Creation of three centres of excellence for gynaecology cancer surgery treatment;
 - d. Public-private partnerships for radiation therapy to ensure all patients receive care at no additional cost to the patient;
 - e. Public campaigns for HPV vaccination, and for health promotion and education on cervical cancer prevention and control, in collaboration with multisectoral stakeholders;
 - f. Establishment of a National Cancer Control Coordinating Committee to advise on policy, identify and mobilise stakeholders, and strengthen leadership, governance, stewardship, and accountability. Cervical cancer has been identified as the priority area for focus.
2. We support the vision of the Strategy and believe that it captures the current needs in the elimination of cervical cancer as a public health problem. The linkages to universal health coverage and the Sustainable Development Goals are clearly expressed in the Strategy.
 3. We support the elimination goal of the Strategy, as well as the three pillars and their strategic actions. They are broad and allow for translation to the needs of Member States.
 4. Trinidad and Tobago recognises that for successful monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of this Strategy within our country context, the following must be undertaken:
 - a. Review of our current data collection and monitoring processes and tools to ensure that the data required are collected;
 - b. Strengthening of our population-based cancer registry as well as the current system for vital registration for the timely provision of mortality data; and
 - c. Review of HPV vaccination data collection and coverage calculation to ensure the target of greater than 90% is achieved.
 5. We are of the view that even in light of changing economies, mass migration, limited resources, and the other challenges that face Small Island Developing States such as Trinidad and Tobago, the targets of this plan are achievable in the specified timeframe.
 6. Having supported the adoption of the Plan of Action for Cervical Cancer Prevention and Control 2018-2030 at the 70th Session of the Regional Committee of WHO for the Americas, Trinidad and Tobago supports the adoption of this Global Strategy and its associated goals and targets for the period 2020–2030. Should the Strategy be adopted, we will use the guidelines laid therein to inform and improve our own programmes for cervical cancer elimination.

Trinidad and Tobago remains committed to strengthening our capacity for evidence-based, innovative and effective strategies that will accelerate the elimination of cervical cancer as a public health problem, and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals 3.4¹, 3.7², 3.8³, and 5.6⁴.

¹ By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.

² By 2030, ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.

³ Achieve universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.

⁴ Ensure universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.