The Commonwealth of The Bahamas

74th WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY (2021)

AGENDA ITEM 13.2 Political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases

REFERENCE DOCUMENTS Document Documents A74/10 Rev.1, A74/10 Add.1, A74/10 Add.2, A74/10 Add.3 and EB148/2021/REC/1, decisions EB148(6) and EB148(7)

Madam Chair

Diabetes is an age-old, pervasive and vexingly resistant challenge. Like the human spirit, it seems to be resilient to change and able to withstand many attempts to control it. The Bahamas recognizes the call for increased resources for education and treatment options, but advocates that these cannot be seen as panaceas to the problem. In The Bahamas, there is significant knowledge about diagnosis of diabetes; and little impediment to access to medicines to treat diabetes. The recent STEPS survey in 2019 showed a diabetes prevalence of 11.6%. However, non-compliance with medicines was more than 55%.

Mr. President

To catalyze compliance with medications, diet and exercise, greater research and support is needed. One step is mandating mental health screening as part of annual checks for persons with hypertension and diabetes.

Mr. President

The Bahamas commends the WHO list of essential medicines and the work of PAHOs Strategic Fund in managing the costs. The Bahamas hopes to finalize purchasing and procurement arrangements in the near future to take full advantage of therapeutic options, to assist in lowering the cost of medicines.

Mr. President

In a related matter, despite the work in raising awareness on the importance of seeking and preserving good mental health in the times of disasters, The Bahamas continues to face challenges in translating plans into practice. Declining health worker numbers and competing time means limited opportunities for building skills and expertise on mental health. Greater emphasis therefore must be made in equipping nurses and doctors – while still in training – with the practical skills to identify and stabilize mental health challenges in the general population at the level of first encounter – primary care.

Thank you.