



CARIBBEAN CARDIAC SOCIETY

DEPARTMENT OF SURGERY, FACULTY OF MEDICAL SCIENCES

UNIVERSITY OF THE WEST INDIES

MONA, KINGSTON 7, JAMAICA W.I.

Tel: (876) 978-2276 Fax: (876) 927-4199

Email: ccs@cwjamaica.com Website: www.caribbeancardiac.org

11 April 2011

The Honourable Bruce Golding, MP
Prime Minister
Office of the Prime Minister
Devon Road
Kingston
Jamaica, W.I.

Dear Prime Minister:

Jamaican Government's Support for Expansion of the Tobacco Industry in Jamaica

The Caribbean Cardiac Society (CCS) views with deep concern the decision of the Government of Jamaica to use government lands for the expansion of tobacco production. As a signatory to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the Government of Jamaica has committed to initiate policies which promote the public health of the nation and not the enhancement of disease.

Tobacco use is responsible for over 5 million deaths annually and is well established as a leading cause of the growing epidemic of Chronic Non Communicable Diseases facing the Caribbean. It is a major risk factor for cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease and cancer which, together with diabetes, are the leading cause of death and disability in the world. The CCS is particularly concerned about the clear linkages between smoking and rising incidences of coronary heart disease, peripheral arterial disease and strokes among our patient populations.

At the CARICOM Heads of Government Meeting held in Port of Spain in 2007, the Government of Jamaica pledged to pursue legislation to implement the FCTC and thereby reduce the burden of Chronic Diseases within the Caribbean. It also pledged to *"introduce such fiscal measures as will reduce accessibility of tobacco."* It is clear that the Jamaican Government's decision to support the expansion of the tobacco industry is in direct contravention of this pledge.

The health of the Jamaican people is not solely the policy jurisdiction of the Ministry of Health. Indeed, we also call on the Cabinet, the Parliament and all ministries and agencies within the Jamaican Government to pursue policies that are congruent with the commitments made in the Port of Spain Declaration.

President
Raymond Massay, MD

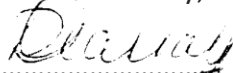
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In keeping with this, the Caribbean Cardiac Society strongly supports the position of the Jamaica Coalition on Tobacco Control and calls on the Government of Jamaica and the Ministry of Agriculture to rethink its present policy on tobacco production. We also urge the rapid passage of comprehensive legislation relating to the FCTC and look forward to the day when the Caribbean will be considered a tobacco free region, with its feet firmly placed on the path to being free from the burden of Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases.

Yours faithfully,



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Raymond Massay, MD, FESC
President

Copy: Miss Onika Miller, Permanent Secretary, Office of the Prime Minister
The Hon. Rudyard Spencer, Minister of Health
Dr. Jean Dixon, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Health
Dr. Eva Lewis-Fuller, Acting Chief Medical Officer, Ministry of Health
Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries
Mr. Donovan Stanberry, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries
Dr. Rudolph Cummings, Programme Manager, Health Sector Development, CARICOM
Dr. Knox Hagley, Chairman, Jamaica Coalition for Tobacco Control