



Urgent action required to protect SIDS from threat of NCDs and mental health conditions, PAHO Director says.



Bridgetown, Barbados, 14 June, 2023 (PAHO) – The Pan American Health Organization Director (PAHO), Dr. Jarbas Barbosa, has urged small island developing states (SIDS) of the Caribbean to ensure “political leadership at the highest levels” in order to tackle the issue of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and mental health in the Region.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, “our region faces a looming triple threat posed by NCDs, mental health conditions and climate change. SIDS remain overwhelmingly vulnerable to this triple threat,” Dr. Barbosa said at the opening ceremony of the SIDS ministerial conference on NCDs and

mental health in Bridgetown, Barbados, today.

The ministerial conference is “key to amplify the voice and the needs of SIDS,” the PAHO Director added, providing “a unique opportunity to share our learnings and chart a bold path forward.”

During his intervention, Dr. Barbosa reiterated PAHO’s ongoing commitment to work with the region in supporting the accelerated implementation of NCD and mental health interventions in three priority areas:

Firstly, the PAHO Director highlighted that to ensure increased access to screening, diagnosis and treatment for NCDs and mental health, services must be mainstreamed within the primary health care system.

This means “reorienting our health systems towards community-based care. And it means reducing the geographic, financial, and knowledge barriers to ensuring more people can appropriately manage their chronic conditions,” he said.

Secondly, the Director called for multisectoral collaboration including lawmakers, civil society, professional associations and people with lived experiences, to develop policies that address the underlying socio-economic factors driving NCDs and mental health challenges.

Finally, countries must build on the guidance provided in the Port of Spain Declaration and Samoa Pathway, to reinforce NCD risk factor policies, strengthen primary care services for NCDs and mental health, and improve surveillance, Dr. Barbosa added.

The PAHO Director underscored that while progress has been made towards reducing NCDs and mental health in SIDS, countries are not on track to reach the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) of a one-third reduction in NCD premature mortality by 2030.

“This is an ambitious, but feasible goal. That’s why this meeting is above all an invitation for us to embrace this agenda with all our might and go above and beyond what we’ve done up to now.”

The SIDS ministerial conference on NCDs and mental health, convened by the World Health Organization (WHO), PAHO and the Government of Barbados, will take place from 14-16 June, in Barbados.

Taking place ahead of the UN General Assembly High-level meeting on Universal Health Coverage in September 2023, the conference will also feed into preparatory processes leading to the fourth High-level meeting on NCDs in 2025 and to future global summits on mental health.

Links

WHO - [SIDS ministerial meeting on NCDs and mental health](#)

PAHO - [NCDs and mental health](#)

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The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) works with the countries of the Americas to improve the health and quality of life of its population. Founded in 1902, it is the world's oldest international public health agency. It serves as the Regional Office of WHO for the Americas and is the specialized health agency of the Inter-American system.