

Honourable Ministers and Delegates

As Canada's representative and Chair of the Commonwealth Advisory Committee on Health, I had the honour of chairing this years CACH meeting.

The Commonwealth Advisory Committee advises the CW Secretariat and its Health Section on its programme of work

Comprising of representatives from governments, regional organizations and civil society, the CACH provides a unique forum for reviewing and discussing current and emerging public health issues to help inform the work of the Secretariat in the area of health. It plays a critical role in assisting the Health Section in developing a productive and feasible programme of work that builds on the CW comparative advantage to advocate for and build partnerships with public and private sectors. In a time of limited resources it can help provide advice on setting priorities.

Ensuring that the CACH continues to be of value to the work of the Health Section of the CW Secretariat requires commitment from both the Secretariat and CACH members.

At yesterday's meeting the CACH focussed its discussions on the functioning of the CACH Committee; a review of the Commonwealth Secretariat Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Plan 2008-2012 and advised on priorities for 2010-2012 (the biennium), and possible themes for next years Commonwealth Ministers Meeting .

On the functioning of CACH, one of the challenges discussed was how best to engage all members of CACH in a way that promotes active engagement, particularly in light of the geographical distances and that CACH members meet face to face only once a year. In this regard, Members recommended to improve the effectiveness of CACH, that:

- the Secretariat develop a communication strategy with the aim of improving the frequency and quality of communication among CACH members.
- innovative ways to raise awareness and improve the transparency of the work of CACH are sought, by amongst other things developing and placing information on the CW website related to the work of CACH

On the review of the a review of the Commonwealth Secretariat Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Plan 2008-2012 and advised on priorities for 2010-2012 (the biennium), CACH members expressed its appreciation for the Secretariat and their achievements in the past year. The relevance of the Secretariat's health priority areas was reaffirmed; these being maternal and child health, HIV/AIDS, human resources for health and e-health.. CACH recommended that the Secretariat:

- look for opportunities to work more closely with Regional Organisations to look at possible ways of collaboration to maximize the impact of their work on common issues
- continue with its establishment of strategic partnerships in order to leverage resources both financial and technical.

CACH also discussed possible themes for next year's Commonwealth Health Ministers Meeting and wishes to recommend only one theme for Ministers' consideration.

In recognizing what we all know about the growing disease burden of non-communicable diseases particularly on low and middle income countries, the need to build on the mandates of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, and the opportunity provided by the United Nations High Level Session on NCDs to take place in 2011, CACH members recommended the theme for 2011 Commonwealth Ministers Meeting be NCDs.

Should Ministers support this theme, the CACH would be pleased to work with the Secretariat to develop focus areas for discussion by Ministers.

In closing I would like to extend my sincere thanks and appreciation to my fellow CACH members and the Commonwealth Secretariat for their support during my term as Chair.

Thank you Honourable Ministers for the opportunity to present this report, and for your kind attention.