

Rescinded Appointment of President Robert Mugabe as WHO Goodwill Ambassador for NCDs in Africa - NCD Alliance response

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The NCD Alliance welcomes the announcement by WHO Director General Tedros that he has rescinded the appointment of President Robert Mugabe as a Goodwill Ambassador for NCDs for Africa, following serious concerns expressed by parties from all regions.

"We appreciate Dr Tedros' leadership in listening to concerns, rethinking the appointment, and responding accordingly," said Katie Dain, CEO of the NCD Alliance.

"The world faces unprecedented challenges in responding to the burden of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs), the leading cause of death and disability worldwide. With less than a year to go before a UN General Assembly High Level Meeting on NCDs, our focus needs to be firmly fixed on securing strong and courageous leaders from WHO, Governments and civil society giving greater attention to NCDs." said Dain.

Since coming into Office, Dr Tedros and the WHO have demonstrated a determined and honourable commitment to ensuring NCDs are prioritised by political leaders. The influence of outstanding champions such as President Vazquez of Uruguay, President Bachelet of Chile, President Macri of Argentina, WHO NCD Ambassador Michael Bloomberg, and Dr Sania Nishtar in their call for leadership and action at WHO Global Conference on NCDs in Montevideo this last week is testament to WHO's outreach.

"It is crucial that political champions and partners are selected with due diligence and careful consideration of their track record on NCDs, as well as other fundamental principles of human rights and transparency. Safeguarding the reputation and legitimacy of WHO as the leading technical agency for health must not be compromised." said Dain.

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Beyond securing political leaders, WHO also needs to prioritise NCDs in its own work, and build the capacity to respond to the overwhelming demand from countries for support on NCDs. NCDs are often the most underfunded priority within WHO's programme of work, which is unacceptable given the burden and demand for support in low- and middle-income countries.

In less than a year, governments will convene at the UN General Assembly for the third UN High-level Meeting on NCDs.

"The attendance and commitment of Heads of Government and State is critical for this High-level Meeting on NCDs to be a success. There is now urgency, and an opportunity, for political leaders with a positive and respected influence to step up and support WHO. Those who have expressed concern in recent days should now fill that void and drive forward the NCD agenda in their countries and globally." concluded Dain.

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