HOW TO MAKE YOUR POINT WITH GOVERNMENT

Each sector of government (e.g. health, finance, agriculture, legal) has its own policy development and legislative process.

The issues facing the cancer community and people affected by cancer frequently cross sector boundaries, so it may be relevant to raise issues with a number of different government representatives.

The UN Political Declaration on NCDs highlights the need to work across sectors – go beyond your health minister and communicate key messages that can be understood by other ministers or government officials. For example, Ministers of Finance should know the cost of inaction versus the impact of investment in initiatives to reduce the cancer burden.

RELEVANT ACTIONS:

- Letters to politicians
- Meetings with politicians (or with Ministers or their staff)
- Media release (attracting media that will influence politicians)

CHECKLIST "HOW TO WRITE A LETTER TO A POLITICIAN"

How to write a letter to a government representative, e.g. Minister of Health or Minister of Finance

1) **Know your facts**
   What is the key message to communicate to the politician and what is the evidence that supports your argument e.g. a report, a publication, personal experience. ○

2) **Identify the sector(s) of government that holds responsibility for your issue and the proposed solutions.**
   For example, Minister of Finance, Minister of Health, Head of Development Agency, Head of Government, etc. ○

3) **Develop a Government contact list**
   Know who are the key government contacts for your issue. ○

4) **Develop your letter and consider the following:** ○
   - Why the letter is being written?
   - Who is the audience?
   - Are you able to support your request with evidence?
   - What is the support at the local, regional and global levels?
   - What is the intended impact of the letter?
   - Do you intend there to be a follow-up to your letter? For example, request a meeting with the Minister.

5) **Write the letter:** ○
   - Content: Accentuate the positive: while the message you are trying to convey may be critical of the government's position, try to also highlight a positive action, for example, all governments endorsed the UN Political Declaration on NCDs.
   - Concise: keep it punchy and to the point; make sure the message is clear.
   - Factual: present the evidence and indicate the level of support – do other countries support your request?
   - Timing: Indicate if the issue is linked to an upcoming event, e.g., World Cancer Day, World Health Assembly, and state why this event is significant for this issue.

6) **Obtain approval of letter by CEO** or relevant decision maker within your organisation. ○

7) **Distribute letter** by email or post or both depending on context. ○

8) **Alert other organisations** in your network of your letter, share it, and ask them to support your efforts. ○

EXAMPLE

LETTER TO HEAD OF STATE OR GOVERNMENT REGARDING ACTIONS FOR G20 MEETING IN CANNES, FRANCE NOVEMBER 2011

Dear <HEAD OF STATE OR GOVERNMENT>

We are writing on behalf of <ORGANIZATION> ahead of your participation in next week's G20 Summit in Cannes, France, where some the world's most urgent problems will be addressed. As you will know, G20 nations represent some 85 percent of global economic output and two-thirds of the world's population; and therefore share a collective responsibility to provide leadership in global development and poverty eradication.

LINKS TO AN EVENT

Last month, more than thirty Heads of State, including several from the G20, attended a UN High-Level Meeting in New York to pledge their support for concrete action to prevent and control a major cause of world poverty: non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which include cancer, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes.

INDICATES HIGH LEVEL SUPPORT

NCDs are a significant driver of economic loss and instability. A recent study by the World Economic Forum and Harvard University estimates that NCDs will cost the world economy $47 trillion over the next 20 years, representing 75 percent of annual global GDP and surpassing the cost of the global financial crisis. Yet, the World Health Organization estimates that a basic package of cost effective strategies to prevent and treat NCDs would cost only $11.4 billion a year across all low- and middle- income countries.

PRESENTS THE EVIDENCE

This year's Chair, France, along with other G20 members such as Germany and South Africa, has requested your support for a Financial Transactions Tax that would ensure a renewed global effort in the fight against poverty and ill-health.

The G20 Summit is a critical opportunity to reverse the NCD epidemic. We believe the Financial Transactions Tax proposed by G20 members could greatly assist this aim and urge you to support this initiative at next week's Summit.

CLEAR REQUEST

We wish you a successful meeting and look forward to your continued support for action on NCDs.

Yours sincerely,

<YOUR DETAILS>

EXAMPLE

LETTER TO MINISTER OF FINANCE REGARDING FOLLOWING UP THE COMMITMENTS IN THE POLITICAL DECLARATION

Dear <MINISTER>

I would like to convey my congratulations on your government's support for the Political Declaration of the High-Level Meeting of the UN General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (UN Resolution A/RES/66/2), which commits governments to take action to reduce the global burden of cancer and other non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE

I am writing today on behalf of <ORGANIZATION> to assure you of our full support to work in partnership to implement the actions contained within this Political Declaration.

<CLEAR MESSAGES ON NATIONAL CANCER BURDEN, FOR EXAMPLE: Today in Mexico, 2 in 3 people will get cancer and every day 35 women are diagnosed with breast cancer and 14 women will die of their disease.>

STATE THE FACTS!

In acknowledgement of the scale of the problem, we are seeking a commitment from all sectors of government to promote policies and approaches that will strengthen and facilitate multisectoral action and include strong consultation with civil society, UN agencies, donors, employers and individuals, families and communities affected by cancer.

We want to highlight the staggering cost of this crisis to our country's economic development. A recent study by the World Economic Forum and Harvard University estimates that NCDs will cost the world economy $47 trillion over the next 20 years, representing 75 percent of annual global GDP and surpassing the cost of the global financial crisis. Yet, the World Health Organization estimates that a basic package of cost effective strategies to prevent and treat NCDs would cost only $11.4 billion a year. It is clear that for every dollar spent on cancer in our country there is a return on investment, yet presently there is an enormous disparity between the size of the burden and the level of investment.

We would greatly appreciate the opportunity to discuss the UN High Level Meeting and share our perspectives with your government.

We hope that you will agree with us that the cost of ignoring the cancer epidemic is too high for our country and that action is needed to reverse the immense burden on our population.

Yours sincerely,

<YOUR DETAILS>