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CURRENT PULSE



Cameroon's First **Symposium & Round Table** for Action on **Non-Communicable Diseases**.

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Introduction

In a decisive step toward curbing Cameroon's rising Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) burden, the Reconciliation and Development Association (RADA), under the patronage of His Excellency, the Prime Minister, Head of Government, organized the First National Symposium and Round Table for Action on Chronic NCDs in Cameroon on April 8–9, 2026, at the Hilton Hotel, Yaoundé. This two-day high-level forum brought together government institutions, civil society actors, academia, parliament, and international partners around two transformative policy mechanisms: Front-of-Pack Warning Labelling (FoPWL), Marketing Restriction Regulation, and Fiscal policy (Taxation of sweetened beverages and ultra-processed products).

With 43% of deaths in Cameroon now attributed to NCDs as of 2022, the symposium marked a transition from evidence generation to policy endorsement.



Day 1: Evidence and Policy Action for Strengthening Consumer Protection

Opening the symposium, RADA's CEO Ferdinand M. Sonyuy set a clear tone: this was not another platform for discussion, but a moment for decisive policy action, and Dr. Acha Evaristus, Chair of RADA's Board, reinforced the message: "As medical personnel, we understand the power of policies to prevent NCDs. Clinical practice alone is not enough. All we need is the pen of the policymakers." This underscored the urgency, emphasizing that while clinical care remains essential, policy holds the greatest power to prevent NCDs. Years of technical groundwork, he noted, must now translate into political commitment.



The Prime Minister's Representative also confirmed the government's engagement: "The Prime Minister endorsed this because he pays keen attention to issues that concern the population. Efforts have been made, but much remains. We are open to all recommendations." Said Mr. Ihyong III during his



The Case for Urgency: Keynote by Prof. Jean-Claude Mbanya

Prof. Jean-Claude Mbanya's keynote presentation established the urgency. NCDs account for 43% of all deaths in Cameroon. Cardiovascular diseases are responsible for 29%, cancers for 16%, and diabetes and other chronic diseases for 19%. More than 10% of children aged 5–19 live with obesity



“Diet is the major driver,” Prof. Mbanya stated. “Excess sugar leads to obesity and diabetes. Excess salt drives hypertension and cardiovascular disease. Our food environment is flooded with ultra-processed products and sugar-sweetened beverages, aggressively marketed to youth.”

He concluded with a warning to policymakers: “Cameroon has policies that are never implemented. If no action is taken from today’s discussions, the cost of inaction will exceed the cost of action. Every delay increases the burden.”

Presentations: Advancing for the Adoption of Front-of- Package Warning Labels and Marketing Restrictions

The Policy Foundation Exists

Mr. Fekeu Ngassam from MINSANTE presented The Food Environment in Cameroon: Availability, Marketing, and Consumption of Ultra-Processed Foods and Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Cameroon’s Nutrient Profile Model (NPM). Dr. Mba Camille highlighted the 2018 Food Safety Law, which already mandates labelling but lacks implementing decrees and enforcement mechanisms to ensure compliance.

Nicole Ide, RTSL Senior Technical Adviser for Sodium Reduction at Resolve to Save Lives, outlined the global evidence: FoPWL is most effective when mandatory, simple, and tied to a strong, science-based Nutrient Profile Model free from industry interference. Lessons from Mexico confirmed that warning labels, combined with marketing restrictions and taxation, drive product reformulation and reduce consumption.



Dr. Mba providing a response to a question



Nicole Ide providing clarifications from the audience from her presentation

Cameroon's Journey Toward Front-of-Pack Warning Labelling: Civil Society Leadership, Evidence Generation and Policy Advocacy

Mr. Sonyuy detailed RADA's FoPWL work since 2021. Laboratory analysis found that 57% of sampled products exceeded salt thresholds without disclosure on nutrient labels. In response, RADA designed Cameroon-specific warning labels, validated them through randomized control trials, and supported the NPM's development. "The key challenge remains lack of communication from government officials and industry interference," he noted. "Our mitigation strategy: consistent follow-up."



Ferdinant M. Sonyuy presenting on Cameroon's journey towards FoPWL

High-Level Roundtable 1 (FoPWL & Marketing Restrictions: Current State and Ways Forward)

The High-Level Roundtable on FoPWL and Marketing Restrictions, chaired by Prof. Mbanya, confirmed institutional readiness:

- I. ANOR affirmed its mandate to standardize FoPWL and emphasized that norms must be mandatory and scientifically grounded to withstand legal challenge. Cameroon's inclusive approach means industry engagement will be required for effective enactment.
- II. MINSANTE reaffirmed close collaboration with RADA: "Government goes slowly but surely. Policies will be passed, and we will follow up for implementation."
- III. The Ministry of Basic Education called for practical implementation guidelines to help schools, parents, vendors, and children identify unhealthy products.
- IV. MINMIDT acknowledged the need to balance industry and public health interests, noting that "change must come gradually."



High-Level Roundtable 1 (FoPWL & Marketing Restrictions: Current State and Ways Forward)

Day 2 FOCUSED ON FISCAL POLICY & TAXATION OF UNHEALTHY PRODUCTS

Dr. Mapa Claris reviewed Cameroon's current excise tax system stating that the ad valorem tax on SBs increased from 12% in 2010 to 25% in 2013, with discount mechanisms introduced in 2017. The system remains price-based, but not nutrient-based, and does not differentiate between healthy and unhealthy products. "The tax system is income-driven, not health-driven," she stated.



Dr. Mapa presenting on Health Tax Policy Context Analysis for Cameroon

Mr. Sonyuy presented on the Evidence-Based Advocacy for Health Taxes in Cameroon: Objective and considerations for health, revenue, and effective Tax designs. In his presentation he proposed a redesign: "Taxation is one of the best buys for reducing NCDs, but design matters. A sugar-content tax is complex for our systems. A volumetric tax cut across all SBs. Ad valorem should be modified by removing the current 10% discount and increasing rates from a health perspective, with revenue earmarked for health." For UPPs, he recommended a 50% ad valorem tax when critical nutrients exceed NPM thresholds.



Mr. Sonyuy presenting on the Evidence-Based Advocacy for Health Taxes in Cameroon

Economic and Public Support

Prof. Ndamsa Dickson presented on the Economic Benefits and Fiscal Implications of Taxation of SB and UPPs in Cameroon. This analysis showed substantial economic losses from NCD-related presenteeism and absenteeism. "This is not a war between industry and civil society. It's a triple win for the state: health, productivity, and revenue."



Prof Ndamsa Dickson during his presentation

Knowledge Attitudes and Behavior study results shared by Chenwi Claris showed 51.1% of Cameroonians support a health tax on SSBs and UPPs, and 94.1% want the revenue directed to public health. However, 60% of respondents could not clearly differentiate healthy from unhealthy products, underscoring the need to pair taxation with FoPWL and Marketing Restriction.



Chenwi Claris presenting on Population Readiness: Results of KABs Study in 9 regions of Cameroon

Managing Industry Interference

Dr. Adeolu Adebiyi emphasized international best practice: “Industry should not be allowed to fund processes that regulate them.” Experience from Mexico highlights the importance of monitoring industry tactics and adopting regional standards.

High-Level Roundtable 2 (Taxation of SBs and UPPs to Reduce Consumption by increasing prices and improving Health and Wellbeing: Relevance and implications for Cameroon)

The High-Level Roundtable on Taxation, coordinated by Dr. Thomas Edinguele (MINSANTE Judicial Affairs) and WHO, clarified pathways forward:

MINFI confirmed feasibility: “Evidence shows taxation raises funds. The funds should be reinvested in health. Taxation is feasible. Sensitization must accompany it.”



Panel Discussion and Roundtable 2

Customs stated: “We’ve exceeded 1,000 billion FCFA in revenue. RADA should formally present the NCD burden to us so we can table it in the finance bill.”

MINCOMMERCE noted its dual role in trade and consumer protection: “Consumers dictate what they want, so sensitization is a priority. Consult consumer associations on price increases.”

Consumers Association called for a dedicated health fund and strict enforcement: “Laws must be applied. No coordination among stakeholders currently.”

Symposium Recommendations

Front-of-Pack Warning Labelling and Marketing Restriction

- Fast-track a mandatory ANOR norm for FoPWL using Cameroon's NPM and locally tested warning label designs.
- Implement the 2018 Food Safety Law through enforcement decrees, sanctions for non-compliance, and a monitoring framework.
- Enact comprehensive marketing restrictions to protect children across all platforms, including digital media.
- Develop and disseminate school-based implementation guidelines on unhealthy food.

Taxation of Ultra-Processed Products

- Transition from ad valorem to health-driven specific or volumetric taxes on SSBs; set rates at levels proven to reduce consumption.
- Apply a 50% ad valorem tax to UPPs high in salt, sugar, or trans-fats per the NPM.
- Eliminate discount mechanisms that weaken existing excise taxes.
- Earmark tax revenue for NCD prevention, Universal Health Coverage, and nutrition programs, with transparent tracking of fund use.
- Introduce subsidies or incentives for healthy, local foods and sustainable packaging.

Cross-Cutting Actions

- I. Launch a sustained national public awareness campaign, leveraging social media to reach youth.
- II. Exclude industry from policy design processes and establish mechanisms to monitor interference.
- III. Strengthen multisectoral coordination among MINSANTE, MINFI, MINCOMMERCE, MINMIDT, Customs, ANOR, the Ministry of Basic Education, and Parliament.

Closing Remarks and Next Steps

In closing the remarks, Mr. Sonyuy thanked all delegates and reaffirmed RADA's commitment to supporting implementation. The Prime Minister's Representative concluded by saying: "The results of this symposium will be prepared and submitted to the Minister of Public Health, who will return it to the Head of State. We are in a partnership with RADA and will make sure this moves to completion."

Awards recognizing leadership were presented to the Office of the Prime Minister, Mr. Ihyong III the Prime Minister's representative, Prof. Jean-Claude Mbanya, Nicole Ide of Resolve to Save Lives, and Hon. Peter Njume, Member of Parliament.



Mr. Ihyong Recieving the award on behalf of the Prime Minister

Conclusion

The First National Symposium on NCDs established that Cameroon's evidence phase is a work in progress. With 43% of mortality linked to NCDs, rising childhood obesity, and strong public support for policy action, the responsibility now rests with policymakers. As Prof. Mbanya stated, "Every delay increases the burden." The technical groundwork is done, the legal frameworks exist, and the policy proposals are drafted. Implementation is the next step.

Prepared by: RADA's Communication Team