

NCD ALLIANCE RECEPTION SPEECH
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REMARKS BY JOSÉ LUIS CASTRO

INCOMING CHAIR, THE NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASE ALLIANCE

Good evening, honored guests and dear colleagues.

As you have heard, tonight marks an important moment for our Alliance....The turning of a page – to a new and critical chapter, as we launch the next phase of progress.

To grasp the significance of where we are today, consider where we, and our global health coalition, stand just six years after we started. We have achieved a number of successes in these early years – winning the victories our preceding speakers have noted. We have been instrumental in firmly placing NCDs on the global health and development agenda -- where they belong.

With well-conceived strategy and firm commitment, we have contributed to the emergence of a framework for a global response to NCDs.

But now our message to the world is: it is time to start delivering... to shift from talking and framing... to acting. Now it is time for implementation at the national and regional levels.

And make no mistake: our Alliance will be a key driver of this historic endeavor, as we pave the way to a healthier future.

Dr. Martin Luther King once said, speaking of his time, “*We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now.”*

This well applies to our time, and our work.

Fortunately, we stand on a very strong foundation as we begin this next stage of the journey. That is very much a testament to the leadership of the man I am honored to succeed. Dr. Cary Adams has led us with vision, intelligence and determination, He deserves our thanks once more tonight. (*Pause for applause*)

Under his leadership, along with NCD Alliance Executive Director, Katie Dain --- [*point to Katie, begin applause for her*] – much has been done to establish and guide us on a clear course toward that healthier future. I am deeply grateful to you both.

Thanks to the leadership and hard work of many people in this room tonight, our current strategic plan is completed. We can clearly see our efforts paying off. The pivotal milestone of redirecting the compass -- from global commitments to national action -- was reached at last year's UN High-level Review on NCDs. And the inclusion of NCD targets within the sustainable development goals... has now been accomplished.

I would like to acknowledge the leadership and vision of the presidents and CEOs of the three founding federations of NCDA - IDF, WHF, and UICC - to whom we owe the very existence of NCDA . (*Pause for Applause*) And further acknowledge the excellent contributions of our relatively new partners, ADI, FCA and MSH.

And of course, the dedicated staff of the Alliance performs at the highest levels of professionalism, and they are the ones who make possible everything we do. (*Lead or Pause for applause*)

I am honored to assume the position of Chair at this critical moment. But the challenges that lie ahead are still immense: We all recognize the realities that comprise our own “fierce urgency of now”:

NCDs causing two thirds of global mortality... low and middle income countries ill prepared and ill equipped against the uneven burden they face.... NCDs receiving a paltry 1.23 percent share of development assistance for health..... This, dear colleagues, is the fierce urgency of now.

In the past year the Alliance has considered thoughtfully how to best ensure that we continue to be sustainable... and remain relevant and influential in this evolving global health and development landscape ... and equipped to seize the opportunity to accelerate the NCD response... over the next 15 years.

Toward that end, the Alliance commissioned an independent review earlier this year of our performance and effectiveness to date. As part of that, we defined and refined strategic directions for the years ahead. Many of you participated in that process, and I thank you. Your perspectives and insights have helped shape NCDA's future direction.

The result is our vision for the next five years, 2016 through 2020. Our new strategic plan builds on the previous one. It will ensure that NCDA continues to be a catalyzing force, dynamic in our response to the ever-changing environment. I am delighted to share its highlights with you now.

We started by examining the broad context for our work. This process gave us both excitement and concern:

We saw expanded political commitment for NCDs, from the 2011 UN Declaration on. We saw Opportunity... to strive for inclusion in the post-2015 development agenda. We saw impressive gains... in shaping the structure of a global approach.

But – as we all know – this has not yet translated into sustained national or regional action. Meanwhile the burden and impact continue to increase, especially in low and

middle-income countries. And of course we saw the extreme shortfall in funding that jeopardizes our progress.

With all that in mind, we have refreshed our goals for the next five years, and set new strategic directions.

At the top – looking fifteen years out – we are aligning ourselves with the sustainable development goal of a one-third reduction in premature NCD mortality by 2030. This will be our long-term goal.

To achieve that, we set three interim goals for 2020, five years from now:

One. To integrate NCDs as a priority in national health and development planning.

Two. To mobilize adequate and sustainable human and financial resources for NCDs at all levels.

And three: To improve capacity of NCD civil society organizations and alliances, nationally and regionally, to effectively influence policies on NCD prevention and control.

To continue to strive toward those goals, we will focus on four strategic directions. We remain focused on what we as a global civil society alliance can do best. At the same time, we recognize that “more of the same” is insufficient. NCDA needs to adapt to address new challenges and opportunities in the changed landscape. We recognize that our success in the SDG era will be dependent on working across sectors... our ability to stimulate improved integration within the health sector... and our ability to fuel action at national and regional levels.

First, we have to maintain pressure at the global level through coordinated global advocacy. In many ways, the inclusion of NCDs in the post-2015 agenda is just the beginning, not the end. Advocacy on these issues will remain crucial -- if we are to see

hard earned political commitments translate into concrete action, resources, and improvements in health and wellbeing for people. We must influence... and even drive... the future.

Second, we must promote accountability. Accountability is an important driver of political progress. And the HIV/AIDS and women and children's health communities have demonstrated the crucial role civil society can play in holding governments to account on commitments made. So with the building blocks of the global NCD response now in place, the NCD Alliance will act in a "global watchdog" role. We will monitor and review progress toward the NCD targets ... and support civil society organizations around the world to do the same.

Third, it is critically important to build capacity of NCD civil society. Here lies the heart of our grand challenge. Yes, we have convinced leaders of the need to prioritize NCD's, and shared proven strategies for how they can implement life-saving policies. Now together we must strengthen the NCD civil society movement at national and regional levels... to ensure commitment, accountability and action on the ground. This is a new focus for NCDA, but something we are deeply committed to.

Finally: we will broker knowledge. Now that commitments are in place, all stakeholders in the NCD response are seeking out good practice and "what works" in NCD governance, prevention, treatment, and surveillance. As an alliance with reach into more than 170 countries, we will strive to identify and share good practice from all corners of the world on NCD policy and practice, and increase access to knowledge and innovations that will enhance policy, service delivery and financing mechanisms.

You will all be an important part of this great effort. Central to our approach as an alliance is our belief in the power of strategic partnerships. Beyond this room, too, lies the path to our ultimate success. In our next phase, NCDA will even more vigorously promote multisectoral partnerships as a cornerstone of the NCD response. In the era of

the SDGs, more than ever partnerships must extend outside of the health sector, for this is where many of the actions needed will take place.

I know you share my confidence that all this, and more, can be accomplished. I have seen it happen....

As a public health advocate and Executive Director of The Union, I have seen the world galvanized into action around the deadly effects of tobacco: A global framework convention, increased tobacco taxes to discourage use and fund educational programs, highly effective mass media campaigns to change the behavior of millions, strict limits on advertising and promotions, the commitment of significant resources to encourage people to adopt healthier lifestyles – all this and more has happened in a relatively short time.

It will happen too, as we drive the world toward adapting programs, policies and behaviors that attenuate the risk factors associated with NCDs.

Another great leader whose words often inspire me is Mahatma Gandhi. I'm sure you have heard this before, but his picture of the challenges inherent in driving change resonates with me deeply tonight:

"First," he said, "they ignore you."

"Then... they laugh at you." – and those of us who have taken on Big Tobacco, and are now beginning to confront Big Food, know this to be absolutely true.

"Then... they fight you," ... and make no mistake, we face fights ahead...

"And then... you win."

We too -- our Alliance, the global public health community, and people everywhere -- will win as well. Because together we will make great progress toward the goal of reducing mortality. I thank you in advance for the contribution each of you will make

toward this great effort... and I look forward to sharing with you the challenges and successes that lie ahead.

Thank you.