

NCD Alliance Briefing: WHO Regional Committee Meetings September-October 2014

BACKGROUND

Over the last few years, significant progress has been made in accelerating the NCD response at global and regional levels. Through the World Health Assembly, Member States have adopted the first set of global NCD targets (WHO Global Monitoring Framework), a global plan (WHO Global NCD Action Plan 2013-2020), and coordinating mechanisms (the UN Task Force on NCDs and the Global Coordination Mechanism). In addition, Member States convened at the UN NCD Review in New York in July, where they adopted an Outcome Document containing concrete, time-bound commitments for action at the regional and national levels.

The WHO Regional Committees Meetings (RCMs) are an important forum for Member States to discuss implementing these global decisions and commitments at regional and national levels. Furthermore, with less than 500 days until the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) expire and a new agenda is agreed by Member States, it is an opportunity to reinforce the importance of health and NCDs in the post-2015 development agenda.

This briefing is meant to guide NCD advocates on the major discussion items on NCDs at the RCMs, and outlines key messages we encourage representatives to support during the meetings.

UN HIGH-LEVEL REVIEW ON NCDS, 2014

Marking three years since the UN High-level Meeting on NCDs, the UN Review on NCDs on 10-11 July 2014 in New York was an opportunity for governments, the UN system, and civil society to take stock of progress since 2011, identify gaps in action, and gather consensus on scaling up and transforming commitments into action at the national level, where the fight against NCDs must be won.

The Review resulted in the unanimous adoption by Member States of a concise, action-oriented Outcome Document. In this document, Member States agreed to specific, time-bound commitments that will guide the next phase of the global, regional, and national NCD response. The UN Review signals an important shift from a global dialogue to national action and implementation. The RCMs are an opportunity to promote the commitments made at the UN Review, and encourage Member States to accelerate progress.

Key Messages:

- **Adoption of Outcome Document:** The NCD Alliance welcomes the unanimous adoption of the Outcome Document at the UN Review, in which governments agreed to intensify and accelerate efforts towards a world free of the avoidable burden of NCDs.
- **National plans, targets and mechanisms:** The Outcome Document commits Member States to bold, specific, time-bound and measurable national actions, including by 2015 setting national NCD targets, national multisectoral plans, and a national multisectoral mechanism. Important considerations include:
 - Tailor regional and national targets and plans to the specific context and unique challenges faced within each region and country;
 - Build on relevant regional/national plans, strategies and agreements (including national disease-specific plans), and be synergistic with plans for other relevant health priorities, including communicable diseases, RMNCH, mental/neurological health, and disability action plans;
 - Develop, implement and monitor regional/national plans with the full and active participation of civil society and people living with NCDs.
- **Strengthen surveillance and monitoring:** Member States have committed to strengthening regional/national surveillance and monitoring systems to assess national progress towards the agreed

Global Monitoring Framework's 9 targets and 25 indicators, particularly to track social disparities in NCDs to address inequalities, and pursue gender-based approaches on the basis of data disaggregation.

- **Implement key interventions and policy options for NCD prevention and treatment:** Member States have committed to implementing, by 2013, priority interventions outlined in Appendix 3 of the Global NCD Action Plan 2013-2020, to reduce the risk factors and underlying social determinants, as well as strengthening and orienting health systems to respond to NCDs across the lifecycle.
- **Strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) in responding to the NCD burden,** particularly in low- and middle-income countries: The lack of civil society capacity was highlighted as a major gap in the NCD response during the UN Civil Society Hearing on NCDs on 19 June, and reiterated at the UN NCD Review.
- **Strengthen international cooperation, mobilise resources and improve tracking:** The Outcome Document reinforces the need to strengthen international cooperation and explore adequate, predictable and sustained resources. In addition, a specific call is made to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to develop a purpose code on NCDs to improve tracking of Official Development Assistance (ODA) on NCDs.
- **Future UN General Assembly discussions on NCDs:** The Outcome Document includes the mandate to review and debate NCDs at a future UN General Assembly, starting with a UN Secretary General Progress Report in 2017, to be followed by a UN High-Level Review on NCDs in 2018. This will ensure NCDs continue to be recognised at the highest political level and not solely as a health issue.
- **Maximise upcoming related political processes:** There are a number of high-level conferences that are related or include NCDs on the agenda, and are opportunities to leverage for the global NCD response. These include the September 2014 Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS), the Conference of the Parties of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (COP 6) in October, and the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) in November.

HEALTH AND NCDs IN THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

With the end date of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) quickly approaching, discussions on the post-2015 framework to replace the MDGs are at a critical stage. Recommendations by the Open Working Group (OWG) on Sustainable Development Goals were agreed in July 2014, and include a standalone target to reduce premature deaths from NCDs by one third by 2030 (target 3.4). Together with other reports, these recommendations will form the basis of the next stage of post-2015 negotiations.

Key Messages:

- To safeguard progress made on the MDGs and drive sustainable and equitable development, **health must be at the heart of the post-2015 framework.** Health is a precondition for, an outcome and an indicator of sustainable human development.
- Agree an **overarching health goal** for post-2015: **“Maximise healthy lives at all stages of life”.** This overarching outcome-focused health goal is universally applicable, will measure healthy life expectancy across the life-course, and encompasses mortality, morbidity and disability;
- A **sub-set of health goals/targets** to underpin the overarching health goal: These must reflect the **“unfinished business”** of the health-related MDGs (e.g. MDG 4, 5 and 6), and **new and emerging epidemiological trends, most notably the growing NCD burden.**
- There is a **strong political mandate for the inclusion of NCDs in the post-2015 development agenda.** The 2011 UN Political Declaration on NCDs and all official UN processes on post-2015 to date have recognised NCDs as a priority, including the recent OWG final document.
- **Agree an ambitious, technically sound target for reducing NCD mortality in the post-2015 framework,** based on the agreed “25 by 25” mortality goal in the NCD Global Monitoring Framework and adapted to the 2030 timeline;

- **Include reducing the burden of NCD-related morbidity and disability, and addressing mental and neurological disorders** within the target and the framework overall;
- **Support the achievement of universal health coverage (UHC)** as a means to ensure access necessary NCD prevention and treatment for all.
- Ensure **health and NCDs are integrated across all dimensions** of post-2015: NCDs are a multisectoral issue and impact poverty reduction and economic development, social development, and environmental sustainability. **This will require NCDs and health to be considered in the formulation of all goals** (including poverty, education, gender equality agriculture, sustainable cities, economic growth), **and the incorporation of health sensitive indicators across the dimensions.**

WHO ENGAGEMENT WITH NON-STATE ACTORS (NSA)

In 2011, WHO Director General Margaret Chan began a process of major WHO reform with three separate strands – (1) programmes and priorities (2) governance and (3) management. A central piece of WHO’s governance reform is to develop a framework for engagement with non-state actors (NSAs) in health. NSA’s include nongovernmental organizations, private sector entities, philanthropic foundations and academic institutions.

At the 67th World Health Assembly in May 2014, Member States discussed a draft overarching framework for engagement with NSA’s, and four separate WHO policies and operational procedures on engagement with nongovernmental organizations, private sector entities, philanthropic foundations and academic institutions. The draft overarching framework provides the rationale, principles and boundaries of such engagement. As a whole, the draft framework defines the different NSA’s, five categories of interactions (participation, resources, evidence, advocacy and technical collaboration), and the benefits and risks of such engagement.

Member States agreed the framework should be discussed again at the 2014 WHO RCM’s, and that a report of deliberations should be submitted to WHO Executive Board in January 2015, for adoption at the 68th World Health Assembly in 2015.

Key Messages:

- The NCD Alliance welcomes the flexibility that this draft framework affords to WHO, given the rapidly evolving health landscape and challenges that necessitate a multisectoral approach. This is particularly the case for the prevention and control of NCDs.
- The NCD Alliance welcomes the measures to increase transparency including the WHO register of NSAs to be updated annually; as well as efforts to better assess, manage and mitigate risks including the establishment of a Senior Management Committee on Engagement and Executive Board Committee on NSAs.
- The NCD Alliance notes with appreciation that WHO favours “independent monitoring functions and therefore engages with NGOs working in this field, NGOs are encouraged to disseminate WHO’s policies, guidelines, norms and standards and other tools through their networks”.