

NCD Alliance Advocacy Briefing

69th World Health Assembly, May 2016

This briefing note provides background and key advocacy messages on the NCD Alliance's main priorities for the 69th World Health Assembly (WHA). Following the headline key messages, the briefing includes background and key points on all NCD-related agenda items.

Key messages:

- **Insufficient progress towards 2025:** Reporting on the global NCD targets shows an alarming lack of progress towards the 2025 targets; Member States are severely off-track. It is time to get serious. WHO and Member States must fast-track action in order to achieve the 2025 targets, including by implementing the four time-bound national commitments on national NCD targets, national NCD plans, and implementation of cost-effective interventions to reduce risk factors and strengthen health systems.
- **Preparations for the 2018 UN High-Level Review on NCDs start now:** In order to ensure a successful UN HL Review in 2018, Member States and WHO must start the preparatory process now. This must include a comprehensive consultative process, including regional consultations and with civil society.
- **Urgently mobilise sustainable resources for NCDs and improve tracking of resources:** Financing remains an Achilles heel of the NCD response, as highlighted by the recent WHO GCM Working Group Report on Financing. In order to achieve the 2025 and 2030 NCD goals, governments must strengthen efforts to raise domestic resources for health and NCDs, including via taxation of unhealthy products. For some LMICs, domestic funds will need to be augmented by international development assistance. It is imperative NCDs are integrated into multilateral and bilateral development assistance. Furthermore, the way that ODA for health is tracked by OECD and reported needs to be improved for NCDs, with the inclusion of a purpose code in OECDs Creditor Reporting System (CRS).
- **Take bold action to end childhood overweight & obesity:** Childhood obesity has reached alarming proportions and predisposes individuals for developing NCDs later in life. Governments should endorse and implement the new WHO Guidance to end inappropriate promotion of commercially-produced foods and beverages targeted toward infants and young children, and mandate the development of an implementation plan for the comprehensive, integrated package of policy actions recommended in the report of the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity.
- **Reinforce the role of NCD civil society at global, regional and national levels:** Civil Society plays a vital role in the NCD response, supporting governments through advocacy, awareness raising, improving access to services, and monitoring and accountability. A growing network of national and regional NCD Alliances support their governments in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of NCDs and help improve the lives of those living with or at risk of NCDs. We call on governments to actively promote a strong NCD civil society voice at global, regional, and national levels, and to ensure that CSOs are engaged every step of the way in relevant processes.

Links to reference documents have been included where already available. All WHA documents can be accessed [here](#).

Agenda Item 12: Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs)

Agenda Item 12.1: Guidance on ending the inappropriate promotion of foods for infants and young children

This new guidance is a critical step forward to protect and promote optimal infant and young child nutrition. It aims to support countries in the development of policies to curb childhood obesity and diet-related NCDs. Many commercially-produced foods and beverages targeted toward infants and young children are high in added sugars, saturated fat, salt and trans-fatty acids, and are contributing to the rapid rise in childhood obesity and NCDs. We therefore urge Member States to:

- **Support a draft resolution to endorse the proposed** guidance and recommend reporting by the WHO Director-General every two years on implementation of the Guidance.

Agenda Item 12.1 (A69/7 ADD 2): Decade for Action on Nutrition

Recognising the urgent need for sustained and coordinated action, the UN General Assembly has proclaimed a **Decade of Action for Nutrition 2016-2025** reinforcing the commitments of the 2nd International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) Rome Declaration and Framework for Action.

- **Make the Decade for Action count for NCDs, overweight & obesity by making ambitious SMART commitments:** Governments are currently off-track to meet global food and nutrition and NCD targets¹. Governments must translate the recommendations contained in the ICN2 Framework for Action into SMART political and financial commitments to achieve these global targets, including by developing or revising national nutrition plans aligned with national NCD policies and plans. The Global Nutrition Report has produced a [SMART commitments guidance](#) to support governments in this work.

Agenda Item and 12.2: Report of the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity

Childhood obesity has reached alarming proportions and predisposes individuals for developing NCDs later in life. The [report](#) outlines a comprehensive package of interventions that, if implemented fully, has the potential to prevent and greatly reduce the burden of childhood obesity.

- **Develop a framework for implementation:** In order to ensure full implementation of the comprehensive, integrated package of policy actions recommended in the report, the WHA must mandate the development of an implementation plan, including a robust monitoring and accountability framework for adoption at the 70th World Health Assembly.

Agenda item 12.4: Responses to specific assignments in preparation for the third High-level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable diseases in 2018

This report outlines the foundations for preparations for a successful UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs in 2018, as well as reporting on progress towards the global NCD targets, the Global NCD Action Plan, and fulfilment of key WHO assignments.

- **Insufficient progress towards 2025:** Reporting on the global NCD targets shows an alarming lack of progress towards the 2025 targets. Furthermore, the report highlights a severe lack of data to monitor progress towards the 2025 targets. Seven of the nine targets are missing baselines and/or 2014 data, and this is particularly an issue for the health systems targets. WHO and Member States must fast-track action in order to achieve the 2025 targets.
- **Preparations for the 2018 UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs start now:** In order to ensure a successful UN HL Review, the preparatory process must include a comprehensive consultative process, including regional and civil society consultations. Discussions at the WHA must furthermore highlight the following critical opportunities to uphold commitments and accelerate country-level progress in 2016:
 - **Implementation of four time-bound commitments:** The achievement of the four time-bound commitments made at the 2014 UN NCD Review is critical to achieve the 2025 and 2030 NCD

¹ Namely the 2025 nutrition targets of the World Health Organization (WHO), the global WHO NCD targets¹, and the nutrition and food security related targets in the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

targets. In 2016, countries must therefore prioritize setting national NCD targets, implementation of national NCD plans and establishment of high-level multisectoral NCD commissions, and implementation of policies and interventions in Appendix 3 of the Global NCD Action Plan to reduce risk factors and strengthen health systems, including through Universal Health Coverage.

- **Prioritize strengthening monitoring and surveillance systems:** Only 29% of countries have systems in place to report against the nine global targets. As mandated in the 2011 UN Political Declaration, international collaboration is urgently required to strengthen country-level NCD surveillance and monitoring, including the development of population-based registries and the integration of NCD surveillance into national health information systems.
- **Improve tracking of official development assistance (ODA) for NCDs:** The way that ODA for health is tracked and reported is severely inadequate for NCDs. It is important that Member States uphold their commitments made at the 2014 UN Review on NCDs and support the technical work underway to develop a purpose code for NCDs in OECDs Creditor Reporting System (CRS).
- **2015 GCM/NCD Working Group Reports:** Two expert reports with action-oriented recommendations to Governments on [Financing for NCDs](#) and [Engagement of the Private Sector](#) are now available to Member States. In keeping with commitments made in 2011 and 2014, the WHA should officially note these reports and encourage Member States to take forward their recommendations.
- **Update of Appendix 3 of Global NCD Action Plan:** The updating of GAP Appendix 3 to ensure new scientific evidence is reflected is an important process. We support listing interventions in order of their cost-effectiveness ratio, as opposed to setting a threshold for inclusion. In identifying interventions for analysis, we recommend consideration of a policy option's impact on intermediary outcomes (along the pathway of effects to a health outcome) and not to exclude policies without a quantifiable effect size on future health (e.g. sugary drink tax). The process must incorporate official and transparent consultations with civil society and other relevant actors.
- **Registry of commitments by NSAs:** The secretariat will develop, in 2016, an approach to register and publish contributions made by the private sector, philanthropic entities, and civil society toward the achievement of global NCD targets. We welcome the proposed process and timeline, and call for official and transparent multi-stakeholder consultations for the development of a mechanism that both incentivizes action and is based on rigorous indicators and regular reporting of commitments.

Agenda item 12.5: Strengthening synergies between the World Health Assembly and the Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

The FCTC Conference of the Parties (COP) regularly reviews progress on reaching the global target on tobacco use prevalence and decides on necessary actions to reach the target. WHA Resolution [A69/11](#) will improve coordination between the WHA and the FCTC COP by including the outcomes of the COP as a standalone item on the WHA agenda. At the same time, the FCTC COP should be updated on relevant WHA decisions such as related to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals.

Agenda Item 13: Promoting health through the life course

13.2 Health in 2030 Agenda

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development encompasses an ambitious set of 17 goals and 169 targets to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and protect our planet by 2030. Three of the nine health targets are directly focused on NCDs, and many targets across the agenda address NCD risk factors. WHA provides an important platform to reinforce the importance of health and NCDs within the context of the 2030 Agenda, as well as to discuss the implications of this new agenda for WHO and global health more broadly. The WHA report is accessible [here](#).

- **Prioritise NCDs in regional and national development plans and frameworks:** Successful implementation and achievement of the SDGs relies on country ownership of the 2030 Agenda. As

such, Governments must adapt and integrate all aspects of the SDGs into their own regional and national development plans to ensure sustainable health outcomes in all countries.

- **Ensure adequate and sustainable domestic resources for NCDs:** As recommended by the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) Governments must strengthen efforts to raise domestic resources for health and NCDs. While Official Development Assistance (ODA) will remain an important source of catalytic funding for some countries, progressive realisation of the commitments set forth in the AAAA and the recommendations in the GCM/NCD Report on Financing, particularly those on tax, will support domestic resource mobilisation.
- **NCDs and Universal Health Coverage (UHC):** As set forth in the 2030 Agenda and recognised in agenda item 13.2, UHC is the target that underpins and is key to the achievement of all other health targets under SDG 3. UHC supports the development of health systems that provide integrated, equitable, people-centred care, and increases coherence in the health sector. NCD treatment and care is a crucial element of a robust health system, and can be achieved through UHC.
- **Integration of NCDs with other health and sustainable development priorities:** In light of the establishment of a new GCM/NCD Working Group on integration of NCDs with other thematic areas, 2016 is an important year to harness the synergies between the NCD response and other health and development priorities, including the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (agenda item 13.3) and the WHO HIV Global Health Sector Strategy and UNAIDS Strategy 2016-2021 (agenda item 9.2).
- **Ensure coherent, efficient, and inclusive follow-up and review:** Effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda cannot be achieved without a robust, transparent, and integrated follow-up and review framework. Governments must commit to voluntary national reviews at the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF), and ensure transparency in data reporting and review. Civil Society plays a critical role in ensuring effective implementation and assisting Governments through review of progress on the goals and targets.

Agenda Item 13.5: Health and the Environment

WHO's work on health and the environment at the 69th WHA focuses on the area of air pollution with a proposed road map ([A69/18](#)) for an enhanced global response to the adverse health effects of air pollution for adoption. The full roadmap will include a monitoring and reporting framework with indicators and objectives to track progress, as well as detailed costing.

- **Promote the added value of co-benefit interventions with positive outcomes beyond air pollution alone:** The roadmap is focused primarily on air pollution and would benefit from greater emphasis on interventions that reduce air pollution while simultaneously addressing other NCD risk factors. E.g. interventions to promote walking and cycling reduce both air pollution and physical inactivity, providing a double return on investment.
- **Prioritise good practice sharing for effective multisectoral collaboration:** The roadmap recognises the essential nature of multisectoral collaboration, given that while the effects of air pollution are observed primarily in the health and environment sectors, the roots of air pollution are spread across a spectrum of sectors. In order to ensure productive collaboration at global, regional, national and local level, we recommend promotion of tailored guidelines for establishing and maintaining platforms for multisectoral dialogue at all levels.
- **Collaborate with civil society in monitoring and accountability:** Civil Society has, among other valuable competencies, unique and valuable roles in independent monitoring and accountability, which are invaluable in assessing and accelerating progress on the indicators set out in the roadmap.

Please read NCD Alliance's policy brief [NCDs and Climate Change: Shared opportunities for action](#) for more on this topic.

Agenda Item 13.6: Role of the health sector in the sound management of chemicals

The 69th WHA will discuss a [report](#) and a draft resolution on the sound management of chemicals proposing the development of a roadmap for adoption by 70th WHA. While the safe management of chemicals has to date not been a central component of the NCD response, there is a growing body of evidence that suggests exposure to harmful chemicals leads to increased likelihood of developing NCDs, including but not limited to cancer and mental and neurological disorders.

- **Consider NCDs in the development of the proposed roadmap:** Links between NCDs and exposure to harmful chemicals have been documented² and should be highlighted in the proposed roadmap. Strengthened engagement by the health sector is critical to the prevention of harmful impact of chemicals on human health, in particular the health of vulnerable groups such as children. NCD civil society should be closely involved in the development the roadmap.
- **Invest in research and dissemination of data:** While data exists for certain NCDs such as cancers, links between exposure to chemicals, including endocrine disrupting chemicals, and NCDs such as diabetes and metabolic disorders are less well defined. Investment in gathering and disseminating a broader body of evidence is needed to support an informed and coordinated response.

Agenda Item 11.3: Framework of engagement with non-State actors

A central element of WHO's governance reform is the development of a framework for engagement with non-state actors (FENSA). NSA's include nongovernmental organizations, private sector entities, philanthropic foundations and academic institutions and are vital to the work of the organization within today's global health and development landscape.

The lack of clarity on WHO's engagement with non-state actors (NSAs) has posed great challenges to the organisation's work on NCDs, especially to the work of the Global Coordination Mechanism on NCDs (GCM/NCD). We encourage Member States to continue to work towards finding consensus on the outstanding paragraphs in the framework to allow for the adoption of FENSA at the 69th WHA in May 2016, with an evaluation of its implementation in 2018.

- **Retain paragraph 44bis:** The introduction of paragraph 44bis reflects Member States' recognition of the adverse impacts of some industries' products and practices on health outcomes, in particular on NCDs. We strongly encourage the retention of this paragraph.
- **Add footnote to paragraph 33 in private sector policy:** We welcome the proposed footnote to paragraph 33, which encourages the private sector to implement WHO's policies, norms and standards, conforming to "WHO's public health policies in areas such as food safety, chemical safety, ethical promotion of medicinal drug products, tobacco control, NCDs, as well as health and safety at work".
- **Secondments:** WHO is under-resourced, particularly for NCD prevention and control, which has remained one of the largest funding gaps in the WHO programme budget. NGOs and academia have a wealth of expertise that could be effectively leveraged by WHO through secondments. We therefore welcome the development of a set of criteria and principles for secondments that will allow WHO to transparently manage secondments and protect against conflicts of interest.

² http://www.who.int/quantifying_ehimpacts/publications/preventing-disease/en/