

**NCD Alliance Statement – UN NCD Review Outcome Document, July 2014**  
***“Unprecedented challenges need unprecedented commitments”***

The NCD Alliance welcomes the unanimous adoption of the Outcome Document at the UN High-Level Review on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) on 10-11 July, in which governments agreed to intensify and accelerate efforts towards a world free of the avoidable burden of NCDs.

Marking three years since the UN High-level Meeting on NCDs, the UN Review 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.

In her opening speech, World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Dr Margaret Chan stated that the rise of NCDs, now overtaking infectious diseases as the world’s leading cause of morbidity and mortality, is a *“seismic shift that calls for sweeping changes in the very mindset of public health”* and that *“unprecedented challenges need unprecedented commitments.”* UNDP Administrator Helen Clark said that NCDs *“must not be seen as a health challenge alone, but also, more broadly, as a human development challenge.”*

By adopting this concise, action-oriented Outcome Document, Member States agreed to specific, time-bound commitments that will effectively guide the next phase of the global and national NCD response. In particular, the NCD Alliance welcomes the following elements of the Outcome Document:

- **Bold, new commitments for national action:** In recognition that progress on NCDs since 2011 has been *“insufficient and highly uneven,”* the UN Review signals an important shift from a global dialogue to national action and implementation. The Outcome Document includes bold, specific, time-bound, and measurable national commitments, including calling upon governments to set national NCD targets, national multisectoral plans, and a national multisectoral mechanism by 2015.
- **NCDs reinforced as a sustainable human development challenge:** The Outcome Document reaffirms that NCDs constitute *“one of the major challenges for development in the 21<sup>st</sup> century,”* and commits governments to integrate NCDs into national health and development planning and processes, and calls for the inclusion of NCDs in the post-2015 development agenda.
- **Balances prevention and treatment across the lifecourse:** The Outcome Document includes commitments to reduce the risk factors and underlying social determinants, as well as strengthening and orienting health systems to respond to NCDs across the lifecourse. Governments have committed by 2016 to implement key interventions and policy options for prevention and treatment outlined in Appendix 3 of the Global NCD Action Plan 2013-2020.
- **Calls for the integration of NCDs across other health responses and programmes:** In his statement, UNAIDS New York Office Director Simon Bland described the double burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases as a challenge that provides *“a great opportunity to re-think the way in which we address diseases, taking a patient-centred approach.”* The Outcome Document reinforces the linkages between NCDs and other health issues, including communicable diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, and reproductive, maternal, and newborn child health (RMNCH), and commits governments to integrate NCDs into existing services, especially at primary care level.
- **Urges improvements in monitoring and surveillance on NCDs:** The Outcome Document has a strong emphasis on strengthening national surveillance and monitoring systems, particularly to track social disparities in NCDs to address inequalities, and pursue gender-based approaches on the basis of data disaggregation. Additionally, governments now commit to assessing national progress towards the agreed Global Monitoring Framework’s 9 targets and 25 indicators.

- **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 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 WHO submitting through the UN Secretary General a 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.

While the Outcome Document is comprehensive, the NCD Alliance identifies the following areas that could have been stronger:

- **Lack of specificity on NCDs in post-2015:** While recognising post-2015 negotiations are ongoing, the Outcome Document could have been stronger in calling for a standalone NCD target in the post-2015 development agenda.
- **Small Island Developing States (SIDS):** There are no references to the unique situation and vulnerability of small states and SIDS in coping with the NCD burden. Inclusion of a commitment to ensure trade and foreign policy negotiations take due consideration of obesogenic environments and NCDs would have strengthened engagement between health and trade sectors.
- **Universal health coverage (UHC):** Although the Outcome Document references the importance of UHC in the health system response to NCDs, it falls short of recognizing UHC as a basic human right. As enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, all people have the right to the full continuum of health services – prevention, treatment, rehabilitation, and palliative care. Access to health services remains a major challenge for millions of people at risk or living with NCDs.
- **Civil society capacity building:** The Outcome Document recognises the leading role of civil society, but lacks a commitment to strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations in responding to the NCD burden, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. This was highlighted as a major gap during the UN Civil Society Hearing on NCDs on 19 June, and reiterated in Roundtables 1 and 2 of the Review.
- **Patient empowerment:** Although there is a commitment to strengthen health systems via people-centred care, greater attention could have been given to patient empowerment and engagement of people living with NCDs at all levels of the NCD response, from policy making to service planning and delivery.
- **Accountability:** With increasing focus on the importance of accountability in global health and NCDs, the Outcome Document is disappointingly weak on commitments to ensure accountability by governments. It falls short of calling for a robust mechanism for facilitating accountability in the agreements made by governments in the Political Declaration. Instead, it calls upon WHO to consider approaches for measuring the contributions of civil society and academia – not governments.
- **Related political processes:** The Outcome Document misses the opportunity to reference other related political processes, including the upcoming Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (COP 6), and the Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS).

With this Outcome Document, the focus is now shifted from global discussions to national action and implementation. The NCD Alliance congratulates governments on a successful UN Review, and stands ready to support WHO and governments in implementing these commitments and accelerating the NCD response worldwide.