

General Meeting of the WHO Global Coordination Mechanism for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases (GCM/NCD)  
Geneva, Switzerland, 5-6 November

Co-chairs Statement

**Noncommunicable diseases – a global development challenge of the 21<sup>st</sup> century**

The General Meeting of the WHO Global Coordination Mechanism for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases (GCM/NCD) brought together GCM/NCD Participants from among WHO Member States, UN system organizations, and non-State Actors, at a pivotal moment in the fight against the unwavering burden of the NCD epidemic.

Evidence shows us a stark reality: Today we are not on track to meet SDG 3.4, “to, by 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from NCDs through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being”. This reality has triggered a rapidly increasing demand from countries for guidance and collaboration, including technical cooperation and support from WHO and others, to integrate NCDs into national SDG responses.

Let us recall the force of what we are up against. Noncommunicable diseases (cardiovascular diseases, cancer, chronic obstructive lung disease, diabetes and mental health) and their shared risk factors (tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diets and physical inactivity, as well as air pollution) represent an unacceptable blind spot in our collective path to sustainable development, causing far more deaths and disability than any other group of diseases. Seven in 10 people worldwide die every year from NCDs. This is 41 million deaths from NCDs annually and includes 15 million people dying from an NCD between the ages of 30 and 69 years, killing women and men when they are most productive. More than 85% of these premature deaths take place in low- and middle-income countries, negatively affecting macroeconomic productivity, national growth, healthcare costs and household incomes.<sup>1</sup>

**Global coordination of collaborative multisectoral and multistakeholder action for innovative local solutions**

However, as we assess and recognize the renewed commitments that emerged from the recent Third High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of NCDs, there was resounding manifestation of consensus among participants of the General Meeting of the GCM/NCD that with a re-invigorated mix of high-level political commitment and multidisciplinary, coordinated and coherent multisectoral and multistakeholder approaches, the NCD challenge **can be overcome**.

---

<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization. Time to Deliver: Third UN High-level Meeting on non-Communicable Diseases, 2018. Available at <http://www.who.int/ncds/governance/third-un-meeting/brochure.pdf> (Accessed on 22 October 2018).

When we look towards concrete solutions, the picture is not all bleak. Accumulating evidence indicates that an additional US\$1.27 per person per year in low- and lower-middle-income countries will save 8.2 million lives, achieve a 15% reduction in premature mortality from NCDs and generate US\$350 billion in economic growth by 2030, through the implementation of cost-effective and high-impact interventions.<sup>2</sup> The accelerated implementation and scale-up of these interventions can curtail the destructive path of NCDs but will require our collaborative, concerted and consistent efforts.

We have learned these last two days that there is not only a greater need for Governments to be much more effective and efficient in making choices in regard to which cost-effective and high-impact interventions to implement, but also which mechanisms to use to mobilize non-State actors, including the private sector, in support of the implementation of those measures.

### **Celebrating achievements, looking towards the future**

Participants of the General Meeting welcomed the successful first four years of the WHO Global Coordination Mechanism on NCDs. His innovative multisectoral and multistakeholder engagement platform has facilitated bridging the last 2 high-level meetings of the General Assembly on NCDs between 2014 and 2018. It has done so by supporting the evolution of the NCD narrative from a disease-focused perspective to a multistakeholder and cross-sectoral health and development perspective that better aligns with the SDG-era. The GCM/NCD has supported this transformative change by convening and connecting Member States, UN agencies and non-State actors. This has been realised through global policy dialogue meetings, expert working groups that support governments address pending high-level and cross-sectoral political commitments, knowledge and information sharing platforms that tackle the complex determinants of NCDs. Promotion of meaningful engagement of civil society that ensures putting people first in the NCD response thus ensuring no one is left behind, is contributing to this transformative change.

The relevance of these GCM successes has highlighted that progress cannot happen without accountable cross-sectoral coherence and multistakeholder participation. Multistakeholder mechanisms, whether global, regional or national, can break down barriers and establish innovative models, platforms and narratives that reach out to, convene and connect sectors and stakeholders beyond health. These, however, will not be sustainable, nor have the needed impact, without ensuring coordination and accountability based on public health needs and contributing to nationally prioritized NCD responses. This is critically relevant at country level.

Taking into account the preliminary evaluation of the GCM on NCDs (EB142/15), the GCM needs to adjust its future strategic direction. In particular, we look forward to enhancing the GCM/NCD future added value in relation to other NCD coordination mechanisms, so this engagement platform continues to be relevant for its Participants, WHO and partners. We will have to take into account the results of the GCM evaluation, the outcomes of the third UN high-level meeting, WHO's 13th General Programme of Work, as well as the

---

<sup>2</sup> Saving lives, spending less: a strategic response to noncommunicable diseases. Geneva, Switzerland. World Health Organization; 2018 (WHO/NMH/NVI/18.8).

ongoing work on the SDG3 Action Plan. Through these and other relevant outcomes, we recognize the GCM/NCD as an innovation and value the sustained commitment of its Participants towards multisectoral and multistakeholder action in support of countries' NCD priorities.

Protecting public health policies from undue influence by any form of real, perceived or potential conflict of interest, is essential in order to implement high-impact and cost-effective measures that accelerate countries' realization of high-level commitments to beat NCDs.

### Calling for action to implement the high-level commitments

We, the Co-Chairs of the General Meeting of the GCM/NCD, call on Member States, UN organizations, nongovernmental organizations, the private sector, philanthropic foundations, and academic institutions to ramp up efforts by all stakeholders at multiple levels to tackle NCDs as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, by:

- Continuing to promote, enhance and implement collaborative solutions in support of:
  - the realization of the commitments made by Heads of State and Government in the 2011 UN Political Declaration on NCDs;
  - the realization of the four time-bound commitments made by Ministers (included in the 2014 UN Outcome Document on NCDs);
  - the achievement of the nine global voluntary NCD targets by 2025 (included in the WHO Global NCD Action Plan 2013-2020);
  - the achievement of the NCD (3.4) and NCD-related SDG targets by 2030.
  
- Urgently promoting, developing and implementing collaborative solutions in support of the realization of the commitments made by Heads of State and Government in the recently adopted 2018 Political Declaration of the United Nations third high-level Meeting on NCDs, with particular attention to **the new commitments** contained in the document, that address the following areas:
  1. Presidents and prime-ministers to provide leadership for the domestic NCD agendas (P17)
  2. Implementation of the necessary policy, legislative, regulatory, and fiscal measures (P21)
  3. Implementation of interventions to halt overweight and obesity (P23)
  4. Development of sound national investment cases for NCDs and mental health (24)
  5. Comprehensive responses to the needs of the rapidly ageing population (P29)
  6. Addressing premature deaths from NCDs attributed to indoor and outdoor air pollution (31)
  7. Addressing the impact of environmental determinants (P32)
  8. Addressing growing levels of physical inactivity (P33)
  9. Incorporating measures to improve mental health into national responses for NCDs (P37)
  10. Promoting access to diagnostic, screening, treatment, care and vaccines that lower the risk for cancer (P38)
  11. Effective treatment of people living with NCDs in humanitarian emergencies (P40)

12. Encouraging the food and beverage industry, economic operators in the area of alcohol production and trade, and the pharmaceutical industry to strengthen their commitment, contribution and accountability to SDG 3.4 (P44)
13. Establishment of national multisectoral accountability mechanisms (P45)

We, the Co-Chairs of the General Meeting of the GCM/NCD, call on WHO to continue to exercise its global leadership and coordination role in global health, by enhancing and streamlining existing mechanisms, platforms, partnerships and networks. Particular attention should be given to a Member-State-led multistakeholder engagement mechanism with a mandate to accelerate action on NCDs at global, regional, national and local levels through collaborative contributions.

Noncommunicable diseases are now firmly embedded in the development agenda, and the time of inaction is over. There is a greater need for collaboration amongst all stakeholders to address factors contributing to aggravating NCDs. It is time to deliver.

**Co-chairs**

**General Meeting of the GCM/NCD**