

Key messages on non-communicable diseases and injuries which have emerged from discussions at ECOSOC during the first half of 2009

High-level Segment of ECOSOC
(6-9 July 2009, Geneva)

ECOSOC Preparatory Ministerial Meeting in Western Asia
(10-11 May 2009, Doha)

UNDESA/UNDP e-discussion on Global Health
(29 January - 11 February 2009)

Overview

Non-communicable diseases in developing countries

Every year, an estimated 14 million people die prematurely in developing countries from preventable heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancers and asthma, with major negative consequences for socio-economic development. This is largely a result of increased exposure to tobacco use, unhealthy diets, physical inactivity and harmful use of alcohol, as well as inadequate health care services. There are proven interventions to prevent non-communicable diseases and manage them in people with early or established disease. These interventions could prevent millions of early deaths from non-communicable diseases and are highly cost-effective, able to be implemented in resource-poor settings, and would strengthen health systems, in particular primary health care. In all developing countries, and by any metric, non-communicable diseases now account for a large enough share of preventable diseases among the poor to merit a serious public policy response.

Injuries in developing countries

It is estimated that more than 5 million people die every year in developing countries from road traffic crashes, burns, falls, other types of unintentional injury, violence, and suicide. Millions more are disabled, temporarily or permanently, by injuries. Many of these people are young, so there is a significant economic loss from injuries through treatment and rehabilitation costs, as well as lost wages and productivity. Proven solutions now exist to lower the rates of death and disability from intentional and unintentional injuries through prevention, e.g. through promotion of road safety, as well as strengthening trauma and emergency care services.

ECOSOC and non-communicable diseases and injuries in developing countries

Policy makers in developing countries are increasingly challenged to formulate effective strategies to address non-communicable diseases and injuries, including the links to poverty. Developing countries have pledged to address non-communicable diseases and injuries at the following international forums:

- Global Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (World Health Assembly, 2000) aimed at addressing "the growing challenge which threatens economic and social development, as well as the lives and health of millions of people." ⁽¹⁾
- Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development: (Johannesburg, 2002), calling for "developing or strengthening, where applicable, preventive, promotive and curative programmes to address non-communicable diseases and conditions, such as cardiovascular diseases, cancers, diabetes, chronic respiratory diseases, injuries, violence and mental health disorders and associated risk factors, including alcohol, tobacco, unhealthy diets and lack of physical activity." ⁽²⁾
- Resolution 61/225 on World Diabetes Day, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (2007) to "encourage Member States to develop national policies for the prevention, treatment and care of diabetes in line with the sustainable development of their health-care systems, taking into account the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals." ⁽³⁾
- CARICOM Heads of State and Government Declaration on Non-communicable Diseases (Port-of-Spain, 2007), declaring that "Ministries of Health, in collaboration with other sectors, will establish by mid-2008 comprehensive plans for the screening and management of chronic diseases and risk factors so that by 2012, 80 per cent of people with non-communicable diseases will receive quality care and have access to preventive education ..." ⁽⁴⁾
- Resolution 52/244 on Improving Global Road Safety, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly (2008) to "invite all Member States to participate in projects to be implemented by the United Nations regional commissions to assist low- and middle-income countries in setting their own national road safety casualty reduction targets, as well as regional targets." ⁽⁵⁾
- 2008-2013 WHO Action Plan for the Global Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (World Health Assembly, 2008) endorsed to "guide Member States, WHO, and the international partners in working towards the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases." ⁽⁶⁾

But requests for technical assistance from developing countries through Official Development Assistance and expertise remain largely unanswered by the international community, because these problems are beyond those targeted by the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The 2009 ECOSOC High-level Segment, which took place between 6-9 July 2009 at the Palais des Nations in Geneva and focused on the theme: "Implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health", provided an opportunity to discuss this dilemma. Discussions at the ECOSOC High-level Segment built on the outcomes of regional meetings which took place as key preparatory activities leading up to the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review, including the ECOSOC/UNESCWA/WHO Western Asia Ministerial Meeting devoted to "Addressing non-communicable diseases and injuries: major challenge to sustainable development in the 21st century" (Doha, Qatar, 10-11 May 2009). The report of the meeting included a 'Doha Declaration on Non-communicable Diseases and Injuries', which had been adopted by the participations of the regional meeting.

¹ http://apps.who.int/gb/archive/pdf_files/WHA53/ResWHA53/17.pdf

² http://www.un.org/esa/sustdev/documents/WSSD_POI_PD/English/WSSD_PlanImpl.pdf

³ http://www.worlddiabetesday.org/files/docs/U4D/UN_Resolution.pdf

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http://www.caricom.org/jsp/communications/meetings_statements/declaration_port_of_spain_chronic_ncd_s.jsp

⁵ <http://www.who.int/roadsafety/about/resolutions/A-RES-62-L-43.pdf>

⁶ http://www.who.int/nmh/publications/ncd_action_plan_en.pdf

The ECOSOC High-level Segment provided an opportunity for Member States to consider the report of the Doha meeting, including the Declaration, and further explore key challenges to including non-communicable diseases and injuries in global discussions on development. Various recommendations and proposals for next steps were put forward, including convening an international conference on non-communicable diseases and injuries under the patronage of the United Nations Secretary-General, and including an agenda item during the next 2010 MDG Review Summit on adding appropriate indicators for non-communicable diseases and injuries under Millennium Development Goal 6: *Combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases*.

In addition, non-communicable diseases emerged as an important theme during the UNDESA/UNDP e-discussion on Global Health convened in January - February 2009.

Discussions may continue at the General Debate of the United Nations General Assembly's sixty-fourth session, which is scheduled to be held in September 2009.

Relevant key messages and quotes arising from these forums are summarized below with hyperlinks to the full statements, where available.

UNDESA/UNDP Moderated e-discussion on Global Health (29 January - 11 February 2009)

- **One of five key messages which emerged from the e-discussions:** "To manage and control non-communicable diseases, a cohesive cross-sectoral collaboration with stronger and more targeted programmes is urgently needed. Among many other recommendations, contributors highlighted the necessity to better relate non-communicable diseases and mental health to the MDGs, share information in virtual platforms and develop national response plans to promote healthy lifestyles and early detection of illness." (7)
- **Dr Ala Alwan, Assistant Director-General, WHO:** "There does not seem to be a consensus among development cooperation agencies on the need to include non-communicable diseases and injuries in global discussions on development. Until date, only AusAID and NZAID have provided technical support to address non-communicable diseases and injuries through Official Development Assistance (ODA) and expertise. The World Bank has also started to provide limited support in this area. Other development agencies and emerging donor countries are still absent in this area.."

Preparatory ECOSOC Asia-Pacific Ministerial Meeting on Promoting Health Literacy (29-30 April 2009, Beijing)

- **Mr Sha ZUKANG, Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs:** "The region is also seeing a rise in the prevalence of non-communicable diseases, such as cancers, cardiovascular diseases and chronic illnesses. Indeed, the death rates from these diseases are now higher than those from communicable diseases. And the region has the second highest rate of unintentional child injuries. [...] ... the negative impacts of obesity on health can be more effectively addressed if the people in the community are better informed, including on what the benefits are for communities of acting collectively to create an environment that is conducive to healthy eating and physical activity." (8)
- **Dr Ala Alwan, Assistant Director-General, WHO:** "The rise of non-communicable diseases creates an enormous burden on health systems. But this is not just a health challenge; it

⁷ <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunct/pdf/FlyerAMRedisc2009rev27March09.pdf>

⁸ http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunct/pdf/09_USG_Opening_Statement_Beijing_29_April.pdf

undermines economic growth and acts as a chronic poverty trap for the poorest, derailing international efforts in poverty reduction." ⁽⁹⁾

Preparatory ECOSOC Western Asia Ministerial Meeting on Non-communicable Diseases and Injuries (10-11 May 2009, Qatar)

- **WHO Discussion Paper on *Non-communicable Diseases, poverty and the development Agenda***: "Six points can be made [on the relationship between poverty and non-communicable diseases]: The epidemic of non-communicable diseases is growing faster in poor countries. [...] Poor, rural populations with non-communicable diseases are doubly disadvantaged. [...] Tobacco and poverty form a vicious cycle. [...] The costs of non-communicable diseases create a poverty trap. [...] The epidemic of non-communicable diseases threatens to overwhelm health systems. [...] The epidemic of non-communicable diseases slows economic growth." ⁽¹⁰⁾
- **WHO Discussion Paper on the *Lowering the burden of injuries***: "... injury is indeed an economic and development issue. Successfully addressing the injury problem will require more than the health sector, as so much of the response involves activities outside the health sector, such as activities encompassing transport, housing, occupational environment, criminal justice, and community emergency response. Thus, because of both the broad societal impact of injury and the need for a multi-sectoral approach, it is critical that injury control be incorporated into the agendas of those involved with planning, finance, poverty reduction, social and economic development, and achievement of MDGs." ⁽¹¹⁾
- **HE Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Bin Jabor Al-Thani, Prime-Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Qatar**: "I call upon all the UN Member States, the major active world economic players and the civil society to double their efforts and to work closely together to help alleviate the sufferings of the developing and least developed countries whose populations are inflicted by non-communicable diseases and reduce the burden they pose on their budgets and economic development process." ⁽¹²⁾
- **Ms Sylvie Lucas, President of ECOSOC**: "At the level of the United Nations Economic and Social Council, we are only too aware of the importance of the health-related development goals for the achievement of the global development agenda. We will endeavour to use the Council's convening power to bring together decision-makers from diverse sectors and to galvanize action by all relevant stakeholders on this important issue. [i.e. non-communicable diseases and injuries]" ⁽¹³⁾
- **Mr Bader Omar AlDafa, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations and Executive-Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia**: "Non-communicable diseases, including cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes, are increasingly becoming more prevalent in our region - but this meeting has agreed that prevention strategies can make a real difference. It is unacceptable to allow our youth to continue dying in car accidents and we must take action today." ⁽¹⁴⁾

⁹ <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfuncnt/pdf/Alwan.WHO.pdf>

¹⁰ <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfuncnt/pdf/Discussion%20Paper%20on%20NCDs%20-%205%20May%202009.pdf>

¹¹ <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfuncnt/pdf/Discussion%20Paper%20on%20Injuries%20-%205%20May%202009.pdf>

¹² [http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfuncnt/pdf/Qatar%20Opening%20\(Eng\).pdf](http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfuncnt/pdf/Qatar%20Opening%20(Eng).pdf)

¹³ <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfuncnt/pdf/Closing-Doha-ECOSOC.pdf>

¹⁴ <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfuncnt/pdf/Closing%20Al%20Dafa.pdf>

- **Mr Thomas Stelzer, Assistant-Secretary-General of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs:** "... non-communicable diseases and road safety have to become an integral part of the overall development planning process. These should not be afterthoughts or by-products." ⁽¹⁵⁾
- **Dr Ala Alwan, Assistant Director-General, WHO:** "This dialogue over the past two days has emphasized that respect for the health-care needs of people with NCDs and injuries is the necessary foundation for strengthening primary care. Many of you have noted that the poorest need special protection in terms of reducing common modifiable risk factors that lead to NCDs and injuries. Too often, poor people are forced to defer treatment for non-communicable diseases and injuries. There has been widespread support for incorporating non-communicable diseases and injuries into the development agenda and for integrating NCD issues and injuries into national development strategies, including into poverty reduction strategies." ⁽¹⁶⁾
- **ECOSOC/WHO Concept Note on Addressing non-communicable diseases and injuries: major challenges to sustainable development in the 21st century:** "Despite the enormously negative impact of non-communicable diseases and injuries on socio-economic development, less than 1% of Official Development Assistance (ODA) is provided to provide technical support to low- and middle-income countries to establish and strengthen national policies and plans for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases and injuries. Bilateral ODA policies are unfortunately slow in recognizing that low- and middle-income countries increasingly face a serious problem with non-communicable diseases and injuries, although there are some promising developments. A large number of philanthropic organizations in the region have started to address non-communicable diseases and injuries through infrastructure development and setting-based approaches in schools and community centres." ⁽¹⁷⁾
- **'Doha Declaration on Non-communicable Diseases and Injuries' adopted by the participations of the Meeting:** "We call for integration of evidence-based indicators on non-communicable diseases and injuries into the core MDG monitoring and evaluation system during the 2010 review of the MDGs; We call on ECOSOC to consider the issue of non-communicable disease and injury prevention at its 2010 Coordination Segment; We call for the establishment of a Regional Multisectoral Task Force to provide strategic and technical input and conduct external reviews of the progress made by the region with regards to non-communicable diseases and injuries." ⁽¹⁸⁾
- **Report of the preparatory ECOSOC Western Asia Ministerial Meeting:** "Non-communicable diseases and injuries need to be included in global discussions on development, including the ECOSOC 2010 Coordination Segment. A United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Non-communicable Diseases and Injuries in developing countries needs to be organized. Indicators to monitor the magnitude, trend and socio-economic impact of non-communicable diseases and injuries need to be integrated into the core MDG monitoring and evaluation system during the MDG's Review Summit in 2010." ⁽¹⁹⁾

¹⁵ <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunct/pdf/Closing%20Mr%20Stelzer.pdf>

¹⁶ <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunct/pdf/Closing%20Dr.%20Alwan.pdf>

¹⁷ http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunct/pdf/Doha_Concept_note_April_2009.pdf

¹⁸ <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunct/pdf/Doha-Declaration.pdf>

¹⁹ <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/newfunct/pdf/Qatar%20-%20Report%20of%20the%20Western%20Asia%20regional%20preparatory%20meeting%20-%20Version%2025%20June%202009%20at%2010AM.pdf>

Opening of the High-level Segment (6 July 2009, Geneva)

- **Ms Sylvie Lucas, President of the Economic and Social Council:** "... the growing challenge of non-communicable diseases needs to be given high priority. Non-communicable diseases and injuries cause 60% of the deaths globally. Cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer and chronic respiratory diseases are shaving the health budgets not only in developed countries." ⁽²⁰⁾
- **Mr Ban Ki-Moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations:** " ... we must promote greater health literacy and behavioural changes that will reduce non-communicable diseases and tobacco and alcohol abuse." ⁽²¹⁾
- **HRH Princess Muna Al Hussein, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan:** "We face problems beyond those targeted by the MDGs. [...] Non-communicable diseases and injuries must also be addressed if we want to put an end to poverty in 2015. Households could be lifted from extreme poverty and hunger by enacting tobacco control policies, encouraging healthy diets and physical activity, reducing the harmful effects of alcohol, and enforcing road safety legislation to make roads safe for pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists. Millions of lives could be saved by incorporating successful approaches for prevention and control of NCDs into primary health care, schools and workplaces. [...] The greatest burden of preventable death and disability, in both rich and poor countries is being caused by the very conditions that are receiving least Official Development Assistance. Fortunately, the need to include non-communicable diseases and injuries in the development agenda is now increasingly recognized. Under this year's leadership by the Prime-Minister of Qatar, ECOSOC has given a high profile to the need to include NCDs and injuries into global discussions on development." ⁽²²⁾
- **Dr Margaret Chan, WHO Director-General:** "We must make the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases and improvement of maternal health top priorities of the development agenda. Both are part of the agenda for strengthening health systems and revitalizing health care. Both are fully ready and mature areas for efficient interventions with a huge return. Both are begging for more attention." ⁽²³⁾
- **Ms Cherie Blair, Cherie Blair Foundation for Women:** "There is a growing realisation that non-communicable diseases are a silent epidemic threatening our hopes for improving health. They are already the major killer in every region apart from Africa. By 2020, even conservative estimates predict they will be the cause of three out of four deaths worldwide. Increasingly, we will see these deaths in low- and middle-income countries, holding back our hopes of spreading prosperity. Yet, despite the efforts of many people here today, the threat that non-communicable diseases pose still does not get the attention, or the resources, needed. Diabetes, for example, kills as many people as HIV/AIDS each year. And while the rate of new HIV/AIDS infections is thankfully falling, the number of new cases of diabetes continues to rise sharply. Indeed, non-communicable diseases are responsible for twice the number of deaths caused by infectious diseases yet receive only a tiny fraction of national and development health funding." ⁽²⁴⁾

²⁰ http://www.un.org/ecosoc/president/statement_2009/English-Statement%20President%20of%20ECOSOC%206%20July%202009.pdf

²¹ <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/julyhls/pdf09/Ban%20Ki-moon.pdf>

²² <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/julyhls/pdf09/Muna%20Al-Hussein.pdf>

²³ <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/julyhls/pdf09/Margaret.Chan.pdf>

²⁴ <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/julyhls/pdf09/Cherie%20Blair.pdf>

Policy messages from Annual Ministerial Review preparatory meetings (6 July 2009, Geneva)

- **Dr Abdullah bin Khalid Al Qahtani, Minister of Health, Qatar:** "The health issues currently included under the MDGs address two-thirds of premature deaths among the poorest people in developing countries. The one-third of poor people who die prematurely from non-communicable diseases and injuries are not covered by the MDGs. Poverty reduction is the central mission of the World Bank, the United Nations Agencies, bilateral donors, foundations and philanthropic organizations, and looking at non-communicable diseases and injuries through that lens is essential. Yet, international agencies are "missing in action" in responding to requests from low- and middle-income countries to provide support to strengthen national capacities to address these emerging public policy issues. What we are now hearing is a call from low- and middle-income countries to no longer exclude non-communicable diseases and injuries in global discussions on development. We are hearing these calls clearly from leaders within and beyond the Middle East, to give these conditions omitted by the MDGs a moral dimension and to invest in them with social values – like a poverty-reduction strategy. We have a powerful instrument in the MDG Review Summit in 2010 to operationalize this call." ⁽²⁵⁾

Ministerial Roundtable Breakfast on Non-communicable Diseases and Injuries (8 July 2009, Geneva)

- **Ms Sylvie Lucas, President of ECOSOC:** "The discussions in Qatar showed the increasing burden of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, cancers, asthma and road traffic accidents on the poor in low- and middle-income countries in Western Asia could seriously derail many international efforts in health and in poverty reduction. [...] Why are high-income countries not responding to the requests from low- and middle-income countries to help build national capacities to address non-communicable diseases and injuries? Because these problems are beyond those targeted by the MDGs."
- **Dr Ala Alwan, Assistant Director-General, Non-communicable Diseases and Mental Health, WHO:** "Almost 14 million people are dying unnecessarily each year in developing countries from heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and chronic respiratory diseases. [...] Proven and affordable solutions exist to ensure that 14 million lives in developing countries can be saved each year. [...] We hear from policy makers in developing countries how they are increasingly challenged to formulate effective strategies to address non-communicable diseases and the links to poverty. In May 2008, countries at the World Health Assembly called for raising the priority accorded to non-communicable diseases in development work at global and national levels. In May 2009, Ambassador Lucas and I witnessed at the ECOSOC Ministerial Preparatory Meeting in Qatar how policy makers in developing countries are committed to scaling up successful pilots to national levels. The challenge is to integrate prevention initiatives into the national development agenda and strengthen collaboration of non-health sectors. In many countries, the impasse is also that bilateral and multilateral donors are not responding to requests from developing countries to support them in building sustainable institutional capacities to address non-communicable diseases, because these issues are beyond those targeted by the MDGs. Currently, less than 1% of Official Development Assistance is invested in providing technical support to developing countries in addressing non-communicable diseases. [...] As a contribution to overcome this impasse, participants at the ECOSOC Ministerial Meeting, held in Doha in May 2009, proposed to consider adding indicators on non-communicable diseases and injuries under *Millennium Development Goal 6: Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases* and saving the additional lives of an estimated 14 million people per year."

²⁵ [http://www.un.org/ecosoc/julyhls/pdf09/Abdullah%20Bin%20Khalid%20Al-Qahtani%20\(Arabic\).pdf](http://www.un.org/ecosoc/julyhls/pdf09/Abdullah%20Bin%20Khalid%20Al-Qahtani%20(Arabic).pdf)

- **HRH Princess Muna Al Hussein, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan:** "I am deeply moved when I witness how health systems miss early detection of breast and cervical cancers, diabetes, high blood pressure and other risk factors. And this brings me to my main point. We face problems beyond those targeted by the MDGs. [...] Globally, 80 per cent of deaths from non-communicable diseases is now concentrated in developing countries. Almost 50 per cent of these deaths are premature and can be prevented. A similar shift has happened with deaths from road traffic accidents and other injuries: more than 90 per cent of the world's road deaths occur in developing countries, while these countries only have 48 per cent of the world's vehicles. [...] The rise of non-communicable diseases and injuries in developing countries has uncovered further problems. It has revealed the burden of long-term care on health systems and budgets. It has shown that catastrophic costs drive households below the poverty line. And this has shown us the bitter irony of promoting health as a poverty-reduction strategy at a time when the costs of health care themselves can be a cause of poverty. [...] Fortunately, as we heard over the past two days, the need to include non-communicable diseases in the development agenda is now increasingly being recognized. [...] What we should not accept is that the MDGs has omitted targets to reduce the number of people dying prematurely from non-communicable diseases. That is why we, during this morning's Ministerial Roundtable Breakfast, and through our leadership and influence at the UN development family, must work to mobilize support for the inclusion of non-communicable diseases in global discussions on development, if we are serious about MDG achievement."

- **Dr Ali Bin Mohammed Bin Moosa, Minister of Health and Deputy Governor of the Central Bank, Oman:** "Heart diseases, cancers and diabetes, long considered the companions of affluent societies, have shifted places during the past 30 years and are now the leading cause of death in all regions of the world, except Sub-Saharan Africa. Let me illustrate this. If we were to compile a list of the 20 developing countries responsible for 80% of the global burden of non-communicable diseases, it would include low-income economies such as Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Pakistan, Philippines and Viet Nam. [...] Another epidemic is plaguing most developing countries. More than one million people die on the roads in low- and middle-income countries every year, and as many as 45 million others are injured. Nearly half of those dying on the roads are pedestrians, cyclists or motorcyclists. These health problems are largely preventable. If we want to address the rapid rise in deaths from non-communicable diseases we are currently witnessing, the key risk factors shared by these diseases have to be seriously addressed. This week, we are bringing the work and the recommendations to the broader audience of the ECOSOC Member States and seeking support to integrate indicators on non-communicable diseases and injuries into the core MDG monitoring and evaluation system. I sincerely hope that this proposal can be seriously considered before the upcoming MDGs Review Summit in 2010. I also call on the ECOSOC to carry this momentum forward to an even broader discussion at a Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly."

- **Dr Leslie Ramsammy, Minister of Health, Guyana:** "Non-communicable diseases have transformed themselves into violent tornadoes bringing death and disability to every country. None of us come from a country that has been spared. We need to catapult our efforts and our advocacy into a more urgent and robust crusade against non-communicable diseases in developing countries. [...] The MDGs failed to identify non-communicable diseases, in spite of the fact that these diseases account for fully 60 per cent of global mortalities and in spite of the fact that most of the morbidity and mortality caused by non-communicable diseases are preventable. I believe that this is a serious omission and this anomaly should be corrected. I propose we seriously consider an MDG+, which would set goals for non-communicable diseases, as we have done for other public health challenges.[...] The 30th Meeting of the Conference of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, which took place between 2-5 July 2009 in Guyana, agreed to advocate for a special United Nations General Assembly Session on Non-

communicable Diseases and include an indicator on deaths from non-communicable diseases within MDG 6."

- **Mr Thomas Stelzer, Assistant-Secretary-General, United Nations Department for Economic and Social Affairs:** "We are witnessing how the epidemic of non-communicable diseases is growing faster in poor countries. Premature death rates from non-communicable diseases are rising much faster in Africa than anywhere else in the world. We are observing how the poor are disproportionately affected. The World Bank estimates that the poor are twice as likely to die from non-communicable diseases as the higher income quintiles. While death is inevitable, it should be neither premature nor preceded by years of poor health. [...] We are learning how the costs of non-communicable diseases create a poverty trap. Poor people are forced to turn to the private sector for the delivery of health services to manage their diabetes, cancers, heart disease and stroke, paying these expenses out-of-pocket until they are impoverished by the cost of care and can no longer afford these services. [...] We cannot afford to remain a bystander. It is time to give this issue its due attention in developing countries. The time has come to consider non-communicable diseases firmly as part of the world's development concerns. [...] The ECOSOC Preparatory Regional Ministerial Meeting in Qatar last month made two concrete recommendations to raise the priority accorded to non-communicable diseases in development work. Participants at the meeting called for including indicators on non-communicable diseases in the MDGs during the upcoming MDG Review 2010 process. They also called on ECOSOC to give special attention to addressing non-communicable disease in developing countries during its 2010 Coordination Segment."
- **Mr Bader AIDara, Executive-Secretary of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia, and United Nations Under-Secretary-General:** "... At the individual and family level, premature death and disability from non-communicable diseases and injuries bring not only emotional pain and suffering, but can also push families below the poverty line. The sick and disabled often lose their jobs and livelihoods, and family spending on healthcare becomes the priority. At the national and regional level, premature deaths, disability, and the burden on health systems undermine development efforts and impact economic growth. We must act, and prevention is the key. [...] Promoting public health is not only the responsibility of Ministries of Health. Ministries of Planning, Finance, Transport, Education, Environment and Social Affairs are an integral part of the solution, as is civil society and the private sector. Health education should be integrated in our school programmes. Employers should protect the health of their employees."

National presentations (7-8 July 2009, Geneva)

- **Mr Sarath Amunugama, Minister of Public Administration and Internal Affairs and Deputy Minister of Finance and Planning, Sri Lanka:** "Sri Lanka is facing a demographic transition - a growing ratio of the elderly in the population - leading to an epidemiological transition. The burden of ill health has shifted from communicable to non-communicable diseases. As levels of morbidity arising from communicable diseases are also high, there is indeed a double burden of disease making the financing of healthcare facilities double problematic." ⁽²⁶⁾

General debate of the High-level Segment (8-9 July 2009, Geneva)

- **Dr Leslie Ramsammy, Minister of Health, Guyana:** "I want to highlight the glaring omission of non-communicable diseases in the MDGs. I believe that this is a serious omission and this anomaly should be corrected. It is in this light that I propose we seriously consider an MDG+

²⁶ <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/julyhls/pdf09/Sarath%20Amunugama.pdf>

which would set goals for non-communicable diseases, as we have done for other public health challenges."

- **Dr Anders Nordström, Director-General, Swedish International Development Agency, on behalf of the European Union:** "In many parts of the world, obesity is a growing cause of ill-health. In all countries, harmful consumption of alcohol as well as tobacco cause ill-health with massive negative effects on population health and social welfare. Prevention is better than cure. Evidence-based prevention methods, when properly implemented, are often cost-effective and can provide options to use scarce resources in key development areas such as children's schooling." ⁽²⁷⁾
- **Mr David Estwick, Minister of Economic Affairs, Empowerment, Innovation, Trade, Industry and Commerce, Barbados:** "... my intervention today is also to promote actively the point that non-communicable diseases should be included in the global discussions on development, and to lend support for the call that concretely proposes that ECOSOC recommends to the General Assembly that there be a UN General Assembly Special Session on Non-communicable Diseases, that special attention be paid to addressing non-communicable diseases in low- middle-income and small high-income countries such as Barbados during the 2010 ECOSOC Coordination Segment, and that indicators on non-communicable diseases be included into the core monitoring and evaluation system of the MDGs (as part of overarching efforts to end all poverty by 2015. This request is consistent with similar calls from other Global institutions such as WHO which has already adopted a Global Action Plan for Non-communicable Diseases (2008-2013) that was endorsed by the World Health Assembly in May 2008." ⁽²⁸⁾
- **Mr Jean-Baptiste Mattei, Ambassadeur, Représentant Permanent de la France auprès des Nations Unies et des Organisations Internationales à Genève:** "Nous devons aussi prendre en compte ce qui a été dit lundi dans cette salle où de nombreuses interventions son mis en évidence l'explosion des maladies non transmissibles dans les pays en développement et à moyens revenus. Nous devons donc faire un effort, particulièrement sous l'angle de la prévention, pour lutter contre ces maladies qui pour beaucoup sont des maladies de la pauvreté, dues à une mauvaise alimentation, un mauvais environnement, un défaut d'éducation, et qui vont progresser encore dans les prochaines années." ⁽²⁹⁾
- **Mr Preneet Kaur, Minister of State for External Affairs, India:** "Global efforts, including provision of resources, have tended to concentrate on some communicable diseases. However, we must not neglect other widespread communicable diseases, especially those with a high prevalence in developing countries, as well as non-communicable diseases." ⁽³⁰⁾
- **Dr Aminath Jameel, Minister of Health and Family, Maldives:** "The emergence of non-communicable diseases is putting a heavy burden on the already burdened economy. In the recent years, the medical model preceded the public health model in our health system." ⁽³¹⁾
- **Mr Shree Baboo Chekitan Servansing, Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Mauritius to the UN Office and other international organizations in Geneva:** "...over the last two decades, there has been a rising incidence of non-communicable diseases, particularly

²⁷ <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/julyhls/pdf09/EU.pdf>

²⁸ <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/julyhls/pdf09/Barbados.pdf>

²⁹ <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/julyhls/pdf09/France.pdf>

³⁰ <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/julyhls/pdf09/India.pdf>

³¹ <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/julyhls/pdf09/Maldives.pdf>

diabetes, cardiovascular diseases and cancer in Mauritius. The case of Mauritius reveals that non-communicable diseases have serious implications for poverty reduction and economic development, not only in terms of government spending, but also in terms of reduced economic productivity. However, developing sound policy action at the national level is a complex and difficult process, mainly for poor small and vulnerable economies. It poses serious capacity and resource problems for such countries in view of weak health systems on the ground and the lack of a system-wide development perspective within which to address non-communicable diseases. This is why shining the spotlight on non-communicable diseases at the international level has become imperative. [...] We, therefore, call for more focused attention by the international community on this vital issue through: (i) initiating and sustaining a dialogue on non-communicable diseases in the UN system through ECOSOC and the United Nations General Assembly; (2) considering the need to convene a High-level Meeting on Non-communicable Diseases; (3) integrating the fight against non-communicable diseases in the MDGs through the adoption of a credible set of indicators; (4) encouraging Regional Organizations to prioritize this issue; (5) assisting national authorities to put in place well-thought national strategies." ⁽³²⁾

- **Dr Marc Sprenger, Director-General, National Institute of Public Health, the Netherlands:** "... non-communicable diseases are a growing burden on health systems and depend largely on primary health care." ⁽³³⁾
- **Dr Asad Khan, Minister, Permanent Mission of Pakistan to the United Nations (New York):** "... while communicable diseases remain a challenge, there is an urgent need to tackle the prevention, control and cure of non-communicable diseases, particularly in low-income countries. [...] In the context of challenges, a growing menace in Pakistan is the rising incidence of non-communicable diseases including cancer, diabetes, mental and heart related ailments that need urgent attention to prevent, control and cure their rapid expansion." ⁽³⁴⁾
- **Mr Valery Loschinin, Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the UN Office and other international organizations in Geneva:** "Russia attaches great importance to combating non-communicable diseases. We believe it is essential to find immediate and adequate responses to this global threat. This November, we'll host The First Global Ministerial Conference on Road Safety organized with the assistance of the WHO and the UN Regional Commissions. One of its top priorities is to address and prevent traffic injuries which in the developing countries alone cost 100 billion dollars a year. This figure is actually equal to the annual world ODA. We are grateful to the WHO and the UN Regional Commissions, in particular UNECE and UNESCAP, for their support in preparation of this forum and look forward to active participation of all States and specialized international organizations in the Conference. Furthermore, we would be ready to organize in Russia in 2011 a special international conference on non-communicable diseases and injuries." ⁽³⁵⁾

ECOSOC Innovation Fair (8 July 2009)

- **Ms Janet Voûte, Partnership Adviser, WHO:** "Non-communicable diseases in developing countries are a major public health and socio-economic problem. They are the major challenge to development in the 21st century. Affordable solutions exist to prevent 40 to 50 per cent of premature deaths from non-communicable diseases, which could save an estimated 14 million lives per year in developing countries. Non-communicable diseases should no longer be

³² <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/julyhls/pdf09/Mauritius.pdf>

³³ <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/julyhls/pdf09/Netherlands.pdf>

³⁴ <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/julyhls/pdf09/Pakistan.pdf>

³⁵ <http://www.un.org/ecosoc/julyhls/pdf09/Russia.pdf>

excluded from global discussions on development. WHO is establishing the Global Non-communicable Disease Network to promote collaborative action to support developing countries in addressing non-communicable diseases." ⁽³⁶⁾

ECOSOC Ministerial Declaration (9 July 2009, Geneva)

- **Paragraph 18:** "We also recognize that the emergence of non-communicable diseases is imposing a heavy burden on society, one with serious social and economic consequences, and that there is a need to respond to cardiovascular diseases, cancers, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases, which represent a leading threat to human health and development. In this regard, we:
 - Call for urgent action to implement the World Health Organization Global Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases and its related Action Plan;
 - Recognize that diabetes is a chronic, debilitating and costly disease associated with severe complications;
 - Stress the need to scale up care for mental health conditions, including prevention, treatment and rehabilitation;
 - Reaffirm the importance of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control within the sphere of global public health and call upon States parties to the Convention to fully implement it." ⁽³⁷⁾
- **Paragraph 19:** "We express concern at the continued increase in road traffic fatalities and injuries worldwide, in particular in developing countries, and draw attention to the need to build public awareness and to improve and implement legislation to prevent such accidents. We call for the implementation of existing General Assembly resolutions and welcome the recent initiatives aimed at addressing global road safety issues and strengthening international cooperation in this field."

WHO news release (8 July 2009, Geneva)

- **WHO news release on the establishment of a new network to combat non-communicable diseases:** "As the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) meets in Geneva this week to focus on global public health commitments, many health and development leaders will call upon the international development community to integrate indicators on non-communicable diseases and injuries into the core Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) monitoring and evaluation system. To support these efforts, WHO today announced the launch of a network of leading organizations and experts from around the world. The network will scale up action to combat non-communicable diseases, strengthen global partnerships and help governments plan and implement measures to reduce the burden of these diseases." ⁽³⁸⁾
- **Dr Joy Phumaphi, Vice-President of the Human Development Network, World Bank:** "The challenges policy-makers face include how to address the links between non-communicable diseases and poverty, how to minimize the health and economic losses among the economically active population, and how to prepare for the pressures on health systems resulting from the growing numbers of people with non-communicable diseases."

³⁶ <http://esango.un.org/innovationfair/notes/Janet%20Voute%20WHO.ppt>

³⁷ <http://www.un.org/Docs/journal/asp/ws.asp?m=E/2009/L.12>

³⁸ http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2009/noncommunicable_diseases_20090708/en/

- **Dr Ala Alwan, Assistant Director-General, WHO:** "Integrating the prevention of non-communicable diseases and injuries into the national and global development agendas is not only achievable but also a priority for developing countries. The goals of the new network are to increase focus on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, to increase resource availability and to catalyse effective multi-stakeholder action at global and country levels."
- **Dr Leslie Ramsammy, Minister of Health, Guyana:** "I want to highlight the glaring omission of non-communicable diseases in the MDGs. I believe that this is a serious omission and this anomaly should be corrected. It is in this light that I propose we seriously consider an MDG+ which would set goals for non-communicable diseases, as we have done for other public health challenges."
- **Mr Richard Samans, Managing Director, World Economic Forum:** "Non-communicable diseases are a serious threat to global well-being. They present a growing economic and social challenge for many developed and developing countries. At the World Economic Forum we are committed to working with WHO, and in collaboration with other international partners, to build an effective Global Non-communicable Disease Network."

Next steps

The General Debate of the United Nations General Assembly's sixty-fourth session is scheduled to be held between 23-30 September 2009. The provisional agenda for the General Assembly ⁽³⁹⁾includes three relevant items for further consideration of non-communicable diseases and injuries:

- Agenda item 43: Report of the Economic and Social Council, which will include the Ministerial Declaration from the ECOSOC High-level Segment with its references to non-communicable diseases and injuries in paragraphs 18 and 19;
- Agenda item 47: Global road safety crisis (resolution 62/244), with report back by the Secretary-General on progress made in improving global road safety;
- Agenda item 123: Global health and foreign policy (resolution 63/33), with its report back from the Secretary-General on global health challenges and opportunities.

³⁹ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/64/50

Acknowledgements

This paper was compiled with the input, support and assistance from staff across WHO's cluster for Non-communicable Diseases and Mental Health. This document does not represent an official position of the World Health Organization. It is a tool to explore the views of interested parties on the subject matter.

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Additional information

- For more information on non-communicable diseases, please visit: www.who.int/ncd
- For more information on reducing tobacco use, please visit: <http://www.who.int/tobacco/en/index.html>
- For more information on reducing unhealthy diets and physical inactivity, please visit: <http://www.who.int/chp>
- For more information on reducing harmful use of alcohol, please visit: www.who.int/topics/alcohol_drinking
- For more information on violence and injury prevention, please visit: www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention
- For more information on mental health, please visit: www.who.int/mental_health