

NCD Alliance Briefing: 69th UN General Assembly 21-26 September 2014

BACKGROUND

Remarkable progress has been made in accelerating the NCD response at global and regional levels since the 2011 UN High-level Meeting on NCDs. 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). Most recently, Member States convened at the UN NCD Review in New York in July, and adopted an Outcome Document containing concrete, time-bound commitments for action at the regional and national levels.

The high-level week of the 69th UN General Assembly offers ample opportunities to link these outcomes to the wider global health and development dialogues and activities, including as related to health and NCDs in the post-2015 development agenda.

OUTCOMES OF THE UN HIGH-LEVEL REVIEW ON NCDs, JULY 2014

Governments, the UN system, and civil society convened in New York on 10-11 July 2014 for the UN Review on NCDs on 10-11 July 2014. Participants used the NCD Review 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. #

The Review resulted in Member States unanimously adopting a concise, action-oriented Outcome Document. In this document, Member States agreed to specific, time-bound commitments that will guide the next phases of the NCD response, particularly the important shift from a global dialogue to national action and implementation.

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 establishing a national multisectoral mechanism;
 - Allocating adequate human and financial resources to implement national or regional NCD plans, to ensure sustained implementation;
 - Building 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);
 - Developing, implementing and monitoring regional/national plans with the full and active participation of civil society and people living with NCDs.
- **Strengthen surveillance and monitoring:** Member States committed to strengthening regional/national surveillance and monitoring systems to assess national progress towards the agreed Global Monitoring Framework's 9 NCD targets and 25 indicators, 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 to reduce the risk factors and underlying social determinants, as well as strengthening and orienting health systems to respond to NCDs across the lifecourse.

- **Strengthen the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) in responding to the NCD burden**, particularly in low- and middle-income countries.
- **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. 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.
- **Maximise upcoming related political processes**, including the recent Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) held in early September, 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. And, **there is now strong political mandate for the inclusion of NCDs in the post-2015 development agenda.**

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. Although there will not be any official decisions taken on the post-2015 process at UNGA, with less than 500 days to go until the agenda is agreed it provides an important platform to promote the importance of health and NCDs to governments, policy makers and thought leaders.

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 ambitious outcome-focused **overarching health goal** for post-2015: **“Maximise healthy lives at all stages of life”**. Such a 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.**
- **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. On formulation could be a target to **reduce NCD mortality by at least 40% by 2030.**
- **Include reducing the burden of NCD-related morbidity and disability, and addressing mental and neurological disorders** within the target and the framework overall;
- **Support a target to achieve universal health coverage (UHC) by 2030**, including financial risk protection, as a means to ensure access necessary NCD prevention and treatment for all;
- **Support a target on implementation of the FCTC**, as one of the means to prevent NCDs and improve health;
- 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.**

UNIVERSAL HEALTH COVERAGE AND NCDs

Over the last few years there has been the growth of a global movement towards achieving universal health coverage (UHC) – ensuring that everyone can access the quality health services they need without experiencing financial hardship. Several recent UN resolutions and declarations have affirmed UHC as a global health priority and called on governments to accelerate progress on UHC.

At the 69th UN General Assembly, UHC will be a “hot topic” for the global health community. There are many side events during the week on this issue. To ensure NCDs are reflected within UHC discussions, the NCD Alliance is launching a new policy brief at UNGA entitled “Universal Health Coverage and NCDs: A Mutually Reinforcing Agenda”. The key messages from this policy brief are provided below.

Key Messages:

- For almost all countries, NCDs will need to be adequately addressed if UHC is to be achieved. This policy brief analyzes the relationships between UHC and NCDs.
- Universal health coverage (UHC) is a goal to which governments should commit. It can help focus greater attention toward coverage of quality services, health equity, and guarantee financial risk protection.
- The NCD epidemic poses unique challenges to the three dimensions of UHC. Access and availability to essential NCD services remain unacceptably low in many LMICs; major inequalities exist in terms of NCD risk, access to services and health outcomes. What’s more, the epidemic imposes a huge economic burden on national budgets and can push households into poverty.
- Attainment of UHC will be dependent on prioritizing NCD prevention and control in UHC design and implementation. When achieved, UHC can provide a powerful vehicle to accelerate progress in NCD outcomes, inequalities, and socio-economic impact.
- Equally, lessons learnt from the NCD response can help support pathways to UHC. These include a focus on health promotion and prevention; multisectoral approaches, addressing the social determinants of health, and domestic innovative financing mechanisms (including taxation on unhealthy products).
- For the post-2015 development agenda to be truly transformative for health, NCDs must be recognized as a priority and UHC must be articulated as a means to achieve improved health outcomes.