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## **UN Member States jeopardise international progress on non-communicable disease epidemic**

Geneva - International progress on non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and chronic respiratory disease, is at grave risk, because of recent efforts by some member states to postpone and weaken United Nations negotiations, an alliance of civil society organisations warned today.

In a letter addressed to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, the [NCD Alliance](#), a coalition of over 2,000 organisations from over 170 countries focusing on NCDs, attacked the state of negotiations towards the first-ever UN High-Level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of NCDs, scheduled for 19–20 September in New York. Referring to the Political Declaration, which will be the outcome of the meeting, the Alliance said: “The situation is urgent. Yet, it is reported that sound proposals for the draft Declaration to include time-bound commitments and targets are being systematically deleted, diluted and downgraded.”

Of particular concern are the actions of the US, Canada and the European Union to block proposals for the inclusion of an overarching goal: to cut preventable deaths from NCDs by 25% by 2025.

NCDs are the leading cause of death worldwide each year, causing 36 million deaths in 2008 and accounting for 63 per cent of all global deaths.<sup>1</sup> Over the next 20 years, the NCD epidemic is projected to accelerate exponentially. By 2030, NCD deaths are projected to rise to 52 million.<sup>2</sup>

A significant and growing social and economic threat, the epidemic threatens to devastate families, overwhelm health systems and slow global economic growth. And yet, the NCD Alliance says, they could be effectively addressed through the reduction of risk factors – principally tobacco use, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and harmful use of alcohol – early detection and timely treatments.

“We have a unique and historic opportunity to change the course of the NCD crisis and stop millions of people around the world suffering unnecessary pain and hardship”, said Ann Keeling, Chair of the NCD Alliance. “To do that, we need governments to agree and act on a common goal.”

The NCD Alliance calls on all member states to grasp the opportunity of the High-Level Meeting and agree to:

- **An overarching goal to reduce preventable deaths from NCDs: 25% by 2025**
- A clear timeline for tackling the epidemic of the four major NCDs – cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and chronic respiratory disease
- A set of specific, evidence-based targets and global indicators
- A high-level collaborative initiative of governments and UN agencies with civil society to stimulate and assess progress.

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## Notes to Editor:

### About Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)

NCDs are now the leading cause of death worldwide each year, causing 36 million deaths in 2008 and accounting for 63 per cent of all global deaths. NCDs also account for half of all global disability, including blindness and amputations, imposing huge costs on families, healthcare systems, businesses and national economies. The burden of death and disability attributable to NCDs is rising everywhere due to changing patterns in the way we live and work. The greatest increase will be in low- and middle-income countries, contributing to poverty and becoming a major barrier to development and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

### About the NCD Alliance

The NCD Alliance leads the global civil society movement against preventable disability and death from NCDs, including cancer, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease and diabetes. The NCD Alliance builds coalitions, develops consensus, produces evidence and advocates for solutions to the NCD crisis. Founding partners of the NCD Alliance include the International Diabetes Federation, the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease, the Union for International Cancer Control and the World Heart Federation. For more information, please visit [www.ncdalliance.org](http://www.ncdalliance.org).

### About the UN High-Level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of NCDs

The NCD Alliance originated the call for the first-ever United Nations High-Level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of NCDs, which will be held in New York on 19–20 September 2011. This High-Level Meeting will be attended by Heads of State and Government from around the world, and is an unprecedented opportunity to ensure that NCDs become central to the long-term global development agenda, to generate high-level and sustained political commitments for a coordinated global response to NCDs; and to increase resources for NCDs and save millions from debilitating health complications. A Political Declaration issued at the end of the meeting will guide future action on NCDs globally.

## References

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization, Global Status Report on noncommunicable diseases 2010, last accessed on 15 August 2011, at [http://www.who.int/nmh/publications/ncd\\_report2010/en/](http://www.who.int/nmh/publications/ncd_report2010/en/)

<sup>2</sup> The global burden of disease: 2004 update. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2009