

19 September 2011



## Secretary-General

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### **Secretary-General, at High-level General Assembly Event, Urges Concerted**

### **Government, Business, Civic Campaign against Non-communicable Diseases**

Following are UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's remarks to the High-level General Assembly Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, in New York, 19 September:

This is a landmark meeting. Three out of every five people on earth die from the diseases that we gather here to address. I am guessing that each one of us has been close to someone whose life has been changed or ended too early by a non-communicable disease. This is the second health issue ever to be addressed at a special meeting of the General Assembly.

Our collaboration is more than a public health necessity. Non-communicable diseases are a threat to development. Non-communicable diseases hit the poor and vulnerable particularly hard and drive them deeper into poverty.

More than a quarter of all people who die from non-communicable diseases succumb in the prime of their lives. The vast majority live in developing countries. Millions of families are pushed into poverty each year when one of their members has become too weak to work. Or when the costs of medicines and treatments overwhelm the family budget. Or when the main breadwinner has to stay home to care for someone else who is sick. Women and children are affected differently but significantly by non-communicable diseases and their impact on families.

The prognosis is grim. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), deaths from non-communicable diseases will increase by 17 per cent in the next decade. In Africa, that number will jump by 24 per cent. These statistics are alarming, but we know how to drive them down.

Treating non-communicable diseases can be affordable. But preventing them can cost next to nothing, and even save money. When people cycle to work instead of driving, they get exercise and the planet is spared more greenhouse gas emissions. When children are fed a nutritious diet at school, their attendance goes up and these eating habits can last a lifetime. When a woman has the access to quality screening and vaccines to prevent cervical cancer, her life can be saved.

That is just one example of the simple solutions at the ready. This is not a problem that health ministers can solve on their own. We need all partners: Governments to provide the right incentives, individuals to protect their own health, civic groups to maintain the pressure for responsible marketing, businesses to produce healthier, more sustainable goods.

We should encourage individuals to make the smart choices that will protect their health. Exercise, eat well, limit alcohol consumption and stop smoking. But even the healthiest individual cannot escape toxic substances in the environment. So we need to keep our air, water and land clean. States crippled by these diseases cannot progress.

Early detection is in everyone's interest. And early treatment reduces pain, cuts costs and lowers the risk of disability or death. We have to get medicine to all who need them. And those treatments need to be more affordable and accessible.

I count on Governments to lead this campaign. I depend on our friends in industry to do what is right. I am a strong believer in the power of businesses to improve our world. Time and again, I have seen the private sector do extraordinary things for human well-being with its ingenuity and foresight that economic productivity depends on good health.

Precisely because I am a champion of the private sector, I must acknowledge some hard truths. There is a well-documented and shameful history of certain players in industry who ignored the science — sometimes even their own research — and put public health at risk to protect their own profits.

There are many, many more industry giants which acted responsibly. That is all the more reason we must hold everyone accountable — so that the disgraceful actions of a few do not sully the reputation of the many which are doing such important work to foster our progress.

I especially call on corporations that profit from selling processed foods to children to act with the utmost integrity. I refer not only to food manufacturers, but also the media, marketing and advertising companies that play central roles in these enterprises. Those who profit from alcohol sales have to do their part to promote moderation in alcohol consumption. And we can all work to end tobacco use.

Individuals can have a say through the choices they make each day. Governments should educate people and encourage healthier options. This will be a massive effort. But I am convinced we can succeed. Success requires public-private partnerships. It requires political vision and resource mobilization.

I have seen similar success happen before. Ten years ago, the General Assembly held its first-ever meeting on a health issue. That was AIDS. Since then, we have made enormous progress. We have a long way to go, but no one can deny that political commitment from Government officials saved lives. No one can minimize the contributions of industry leaders who made medicines affordable and available. No one can doubt the value of the United Nations in driving the global campaign to stop AIDS.

Non-communicable diseases are different from AIDS, but many of the same tools work in response. From visiting clinics and hospitals around the world, I know that holistic action on health works.

Improving health systems improves health services. Involving all parts of government attacks all sides of a problem. And taking comprehensive action is the best way to protect against all diseases. Addressing non-communicable diseases is critical for global public health, but it will also be good for the economy, for the environment, for the global public good in the broadest sense. If we come together to tackle non-communicable diseases, we can do more than heal individuals — we can safeguard our very future.

The Political Declaration that so many of you worked hard to draft and build consensus on is an excellent foundation. We must act together to carry out its provisions and bring non-communicable diseases into our broader global health and development agenda.

We should all work to meet targets to reduce the risks. WHO's "best buys" serve as excellent guidance. I especially challenge Member States to step up accountability for carrying out the Political Declaration. If this document remains just a set of words, we will have failed in our obligations towards future generations. But if we can give this Political Declaration meaning through multiple, concerted and tough actions, we will honour our responsibility to safeguard our shared future.

I count on your leadership and commitment and I thank you very much.

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## UN launches global campaign to curb death toll from non-communicable diseases

<http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=39600&Cr=non+communicable+diseases&Cr1=>



Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon addresses high-level meeting on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases

19 September 2011 –

The United Nations today launched an all-out attack on non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cancer and diabetes with a summit meeting devoted to curbing the factors, like tobacco and alcohol use, behind the often preventable scourge that causes 63 per cent of all deaths.

The two-day **high-level General Assembly meeting**, attended by more than 30 heads of State and Government and at least 100 other senior ministers and experts, adopted a declaration calling for a multi-pronged campaign by governments, industry and civil society to set up by 2013 the plans needed to curb the risk factors behind the four groups of NCDs – cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes.

Steps range from price and tax measures to reduce tobacco consumption to curbing the extensive marketing to children, particularly on television, of foods and beverages that are high in saturated fats, trans-fatty acids, sugars, or salt. Other measures seek to cut the harmful consumption of alcohol, promote overall healthy diets and increase physical activity. The overall toll of NCDs is estimated at 36 million out of a total of 57 million annually.

"This will be a massive effort, but I am convinced we can succeed," **Secretary-General** Ban Ki-moon **told** the **opening session** of the landmark summit, only the second ever to deal with health (the first was HIV/AIDS), noting that over a quarter of all people who die from NCDs succumb in the prime of their lives, the vast majority of them in developing countries.

"Our collaboration is more than a public health necessity. Non-communicable diseases are a threat to development. NCDs hit the poor and vulnerable particularly hard, and drive them deeper into poverty," he said, with millions of families pushed into poverty each year when a member becomes too weak to work or when the costs of medicines and treatments overwhelm the family budget.

"The prognosis is grim. According to the World Health Organization (**WHO**), deaths from NCDs will increase by 17 per cent in the next decade. In Africa, that number will jump by 24 per cent."

He called on governments, individuals, civic groups and businesses to all play their part. "There is a well-documented and shameful history of certain players in industry who ignored the science, sometimes even their own research, and put public health at risk to protect their own profits," he said.

"There are many, many more industry giants which acted responsibly. That is all the more reason we must hold everyone accountable, so that the disgraceful actions of a few do not sully the reputation of the many which are doing such important work to foster our progress," he added, calling on corporations that profit from selling processed foods to children, including manufacturers, media, marketing and advertising companies, to act with the utmost integrity.

General Assembly President Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser **stressed** the need for international cooperation to tackle the problem. "The global community must work together to monitor, reduce exposure to risks, and strengthen health care for people with non-communicable diseases," he said.

"The impact of this loss, this tragedy, goes beyond individuals, beyond families. NCDs are altering demographics. They are stunting development. And they are impacting economic growth."

The summit **declaration** calls for greater measures at global, regional and national levels to prevent and control NCDs, stresses that about 9 million of the deaths occur before the age of 60, with nearly 80 per cent of those in developing countries, and cites "the vicious cycle whereby non-communicable diseases and their risk factors worsen poverty, while poverty contributes to rising rates of non-communicable diseases."

Noting that "the rising prevalence, morbidity and mortality" of NCDs can be largely prevented and controlled through collective and multisectoral action by all Member States and other relevant stakeholders, it highlights the need for universal national health coverage and strengthened international cooperation to provide technical assistance and capacity-building to developing countries.

It calls on WHO, as the lead UN specialized agency for health and the vanguard of the global effort, to set up a comprehensive global monitoring framework and prepare recommendations for voluntary global targets before the end of 2012.