

WHF Statement – Agenda Item 9.6 – Colombo Declaration on strengthening health systems to accelerate delivery of NCD services at the primary health care level (SEA/RC69/R1)

Honourable Chair and distinguished delegates,

This statement is on behalf of the World Heart Federation, supported by the NCD Alliance and Healthy India Alliance, Lanka NCD Alliance and Myanmar NCD Alliance.

We congratulate the Member States on making progress on the commitments made under the Colombo Declaration, and we encourage the SEARO Member States to rise to the challenge of prioritising the prevention and better management of NCDs, through strengthening health systems and specifically primary health care.

I would like to draw your attention to a particular disease to emphasise the importance of supporting primary care for NCDs. Rheumatic heart disease, a devastating illness affecting 33 million young people, can easily be prevented at the primary healthcare level. The disease starts as a sore throat which can be easily treated by basic primary care -but the devastating heart failure when this disease progresses is not so easy to treat -and we lose many young lives as a result. Our frontline physicians and health care workers must be provided with the infrastructure, support and training to prevent, as well as diagnose, this and other NCDs at any early stage. To miss these opportunities is devastating.

We therefore call on SEA Members States to:

Step up efforts on NCDs to meet the 25x25 and 2030 targets

Support implementation of all cost-effective interventions for the prevention and control of NCDs rather than just selecting “NCD accelerators” from the Best Buys full list, as this would allow room for the unhealthy commodity industries to influence Members States. WHO and its regional offices play an important role at providing advice on country specific adaptations.

Elevate the voices of people living with NCDs, young people, and marginalised populations for their needs to be met and their views incorporated in the NCD response.

Secure sustainable financing for NCDs. Despite the large economic and social costs – current funding falls well short of what is required.

Exercise caution when engaging the private sector in the NCD response, as we must ensure public health comes before narrow commercial interests.

We stand by to support Member States to accelerate their commitments on NCDs and to build on the priorities included in the Colombo Declaration and those adopted at the 2018 UN HLM on NCDs. Thank you for your attention.