

NCD Alliance Advocacy Briefing: 70th World Health Assembly 2017

This briefing note provides an overview of the NCD Alliance's advocacy priorities for the 70th World Health Assembly (WHA).

Agenda Item 15: Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs)

Agenda item 15.1 Preparation for the third High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, to be held in 2018 [A70/27](#), [EB140.R7](#)

The report provides an update on the progress against the four national, time-bound commitments made at the UN NCD Review in 2014, WHO's assignments to update Appendix 3 of the Global NCD Action Plan (GAP) and to develop an approach to register contributions from Non-State Actors (NSAs) to the achievement of the 9 voluntary NCD targets, the GCM/NCD work plan 2018-19, and the [WHO Global Conference on NCDs](#) 18-20 October 2017 in Montevideo, Uruguay.

Resolution [EB140.R7](#) recommends to the WHA to endorse the updated Appendix 3; note the GCM/NCD 2018-19 work plan; urges Member States to follow-up on their international commitments and to support the preparations for the 2018 UN HLM on NCDs; and requests the WHO Director-General to submit a report on the preparation for the 2018 UN HLM on NCDs to the 71st WHA in May 2018.

Key messages:

- **Accelerate progress in implementing the four national, time-bound targets:** In 2015, 138 Member States had shown very poor or no progress against commitments made in 2014 to implement national responses. This assessment underlines the urgent need for domestic and multi- and bilateral resource mobilization and increased technical assistance to overcome lack of policy expertise to integrate NCDs into national development planning; to increase legal expertise to implement regulatory and fiscal measures, and to assist multisectoral responses while effectively counter industry interference.
- **Ensure adequate financing of WHO's work on NCDs:** WHO's work on NCDs is chronically underfunded despite it being the programme area most prioritized for WHO technical cooperation at country level¹. An increase in voluntary assessed contributions from Member States (agenda item 11.2) is critical to deliver on urgent, new priorities and to close the funding gap for NCDs.
- **Support the preparatory process for a successful 2018 UN High-Level Meeting²:** We call on countries to commit to making the success of the 2018 UNHLM a priority, and support a preparatory process, including regional preparatory meetings, to ensure:
 1. **Participation by heads of state and government in the 2018 UNHLM;**
 2. **Political mobilisation across health and relevant non-health sectors;**
 3. **Meaningful engagement of people living with NCDs and civil society;**
 4. **An action-oriented outcome document with bold commitments for all relevant sectors.**
- **Welcome the WHO Global Conference on NCDs hosted by the President of Uruguay in October 2017 as a crucial preparatory meeting for the 2018 HLM** focusing on NCDs in the Sustainable Development Goals, and the need to move from rhetoric to action on policy coherence and working across sectors to achieve the NCD targets. We urge governments to facilitate civil society participation throughout all segments of the conference and to adopt a bold *Montevideo Roadmap* that will catalyse national action.

¹ http://www.who.int/about/finances-accountability/budget/20170113_delivering-for-results_background-paper_draft.pdf

² A document containing the NCD Alliance process priorities for the 2018 UNHLM is available [here](#).

- **Endorse the updated Appendix 3 of Global NCD Action Plan:** We commend WHO for the updated and expanded Appendix 3. The document is significantly improved compared to its original version, in particular in the area of unhealthy diets and physical activity, treatment of early cancers, primary prevention for rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease, and palliative care. We welcome that the updated document acknowledges the limitations of cost-effectiveness analysis and emphasises the potential of population-based interventions, including regulatory and fiscal policies, to reduce inequalities in the prevention and control of NCDs. We strongly encourage Member States to endorse this document.
- **Provide clear guidance on the approach to register contributions from NSAs³:** Despite some improvements, the approach remains very broad. An expert-led, intensive next work phase is required to develop a sophisticated set of indicators and a robust monitoring and evaluation component. The platform must under no circumstances distract the focus away from the urgent need for policy action, including legislation, regulation and fiscal measures, to be taken by Member States to address exposure to NCD risk factors and to improve NCD care. We remain concerned that the current resources of the WHO place considerable challenges to the development and effective implementation of the register.

Agenda item 15.2 Draft global action plan on the public health response to dementia [A70/28](#) and [EB140\(7\)](#)

Decision EB140(7) recommends to the 70th WHA to endorse the action plan, urges Member States to develop practicable, ambitious national implementation strategies, and requests the WHO Director-General to submit progress reports in 2020, 2023 and 2026 on the plan's implementation.

Key Messages:

- **Adopt decision EB140(7) to endorse the action plan.** We urge Member States to swiftly move to the development and implementation of national plans with targets and monitoring frameworks. It is an imperative that these plans be costed and are accompanied with a clear budget for implementation.

Agenda item 15.5: Report of the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity: implementation plan [A70/31](#)

We welcome this significantly improved plan with a much stronger and more extensive set of interventions and a greater focus on regulatory, legislative and fiscal measures.

Key Messages:

- **Endorse the implementation plan and support the development of a monitoring framework:** The proposed second work phase to develop a framework for monitoring and evaluation is vital to track the progress of the implementation of the ECHO recommendations. The framework can be based on a review of existing indicators, reporting mechanisms and identification of baselines. We are concerned that in the absence of a strong monitoring and evaluation framework, the plan will not deliver on its objective to halt the rise in childhood overweight and obesity. The PAHO Plan of Action for the Prevention of Obesity in Children and Adolescents (2014-2019) is a good example of a plan that includes time-bound objectives and indicators with associated baselines and targets for the implementation of a set of effective policies, laws, regulations and interventions.
- **Recommended stakeholder actions should be SMART and relevant to each stakeholder's core business activities:** We commend WHO for taking a nuanced approach to the issue of conflict-of-interest, both outlining the positive contributions the private sector can make to obesity prevention but also acknowledging that industry self-regulation has limited value and is often used as a strategy to defer effective regulation. We remain concerned about the recommended action for the private sector to 'facilitate access to, and participation in, physical activity'. This may lead to industry whose core business is the supply and promotion of foods or beverages to focus on physical activity as a priority rather than to

³ The NCD Alliance submission on the approach to register contributions from NSAs (October 2016) can be found [here](#).

address harmful practices related to their core business, such as the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to children.

- **Refer explicitly to the updated Appendix 3 of the Global NCD Action Plan** to emphasise that many of the Implementation Plan's recommended actions also fall within the cost-effective interventions outlined in Appendix 3.

Agenda item 15.6: Cancer prevention and control in the context of an integrated approach [A70/32](#); (resolution)

We welcome the comprehensive resolution text, which covers cancer prevention, diagnosis, early detection, treatment and care through an integrated approach, and establishes the core disciplines and services for a holistic and impactful response.

Key Messages:

- **Support the retention of language around HPV and HBV vaccination for the prevention of cervical and liver cancers.** Although these vaccines have been proven to be a safe and cost-effective prevention mechanism, especially for low income settings, and are recognised within the WHO Global NCD Action Plan, a number of Member States would like to see specific reference to individual vaccines removed from the text. We support proposals to reach consensus by retaining vaccinations in the text through more general language e.g. referring to the WHO Global Vaccine Action Plan.
- **Encourage consensus around language on access to medicines with a focus on effective solutions.** Debate on access to essential medicines continues to be centred on TRIPS and proposals to delink the cost of medicines from R&D. While we would like to see stronger language on access to medicines, we are supportive of Member States' efforts to find agreement, and encourage action-oriented language tasking WHO with further work in this area to identify solutions.

Agenda Item 13: Health Systems

Agenda item 13.7: Promoting the health of refugees and migrants [A70/24](#)

Taking note of report [EB140/24](#), the 140th Executive Board adopted decision [EB140\(9\)](#), which requests the Director-General to prepare a draft framework of priorities and guiding principles to promote the health of refugees and migrants, to be considered by the 70th WHA; and a draft global action plan on the health of refugees and migrants, in full consultation and cooperation with Member States, International Organization for Migration, UNHCR and others, to be considered for adoption by the 72nd WHA.

Key Messages:

- **Ensure availability of NCD medicines and minimise risk exposure**, prioritising implementation of the WHO PEN package in migrant settings, together with support for mental health disorders.
- **Strengthen whole health systems** to maximise the likelihood of migrants and refugees being successfully integrated into host health systems for longer term care.

Agenda Item 16: Promoting health through the life course

Agenda item 16.1: Progress in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development [A70/35](#) and in implementing resolution [WHA69.11](#)

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides governments and the international community with an ambitious set of 17 goals and 169 targets to end extreme poverty, fight inequality and injustice, and protect our planet by 2030. The WHA provides an important platform to reinforce the importance of NCDs within the context of health in the 2030 Agenda.

Key Messages:

- **Facilitate intersectoral partnerships with relevant stakeholders.** Achieving SDG 3, including the NCD targets, requires innovative, multisectoral partnerships that draw upon all sectors whose outputs have an impact on health and NCDs. A Health in All Policies approach is essential for achieving sustainable development, and in the lead up to the 2018 UN High-level Review on NCDs, it is vital that such partnerships are formed.
- **Strengthen health systems to respond to the increasing burden of NCDs.** Stronger and resilient health systems are necessary to deliver for rapidly growing populations, many of who face the burden of NCDs. Comprehensive universal health coverage must include essential NCD interventions, and national and regional plans should prioritise NCDs.
- **Ensure adequate and sustained financial resources for NCDs.** Increasing domestic resources for NCDs and health is a critical strategy for achieving progress on the 2030 Agenda. As recognised in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, taxes on unhealthy commodities that are NCD risk factors such as tobacco, provide a win-win solution by increasing domestic revenue and decreasing consumption. Simultaneously, sustained official development assistance for health is a critical source of funding, especially for low-income countries, and ODA for health must therefore better align with actual burden of disease.

Agenda item 16.2: The role of the health sector in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management towards the 2020 goal and beyond [A70/36](#)

WHA resolution [WHA69.4](#) requested the development of a road map for the health sector to achieve the use and production of chemicals in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment by 2020. We commend WHO and Member States for the consultative process including civil society to develop the roadmap. We further commend the references made to NCDs throughout the document.

Key messages:

- **Support the adoption of the roadmap** and ensure rapid implementation.
- **Exercise caution against industry interference at national level:** Grave misconduct by industry includes manipulation of scientific literature and lobbying of officials against effective national regulation.

Agenda Item 16.3: Global Strategy for Women’s, Children’s and Adolescents’ Health (2016-2030): adolescents’ health [A70/37](#)

The Global Strategy provides a road map to end preventable mortality, to promote health and well-being, and to expand enabling environments with evidence-based action areas for the health and other sectors, and a focus on community engagement. The WHA provides an opportunity to highlight the importance of addressing NCDs within the context of the Global Strategy.

Key Messages:

- **Increase awareness and collaboration to address the synergies between women’s, children’s and adolescents’ health and NCD agendas.** The Global Strategy recognizes the need to address NCDs throughout the lifecourse in order to promote the health of women, children, and adolescents. This recognition must translate into action via integrated service delivery models and policies that promote comprehensive health services.