

Key Issues in the draft Political Declaration on the UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs

31 August 2011

This paper sets out the key issues that the NCD Alliance believes must be resolved in the final High-Level Meeting (HLM) Political Declaration if it is to have significance for the global NCD crisis. This paper can be downloaded from <http://www.ncdalliance.org/takeactionnow> in both pdf and Word formats.

It covers the main areas of concern with the current draft Declaration as Member States prepare to return to negotiations on 1 September:

- The lack of an overall goal to reduce preventable deaths from NCDs
- The lack of clear targets to achieve the overall goal
- The lack of commitments to resources
- The need for access to medicines and technologies
- The need for strong tax policies
- The need for a follow-up mechanism and comprehensive review of progress

OUR GOAL SHOULD BE TO REDUCE PREVENTABLE DEATHS IN THE NCD EPIDEMIC

The document continues to be on strong on general pronouncements about the size and nature of the NCD crisis and weak on commitments to take action. It *“notes also with profound concern that NCDs are among the leading causes of preventable morbidity and of related disability”* and *“recognizes that the rising prevalence, morbidity and mortality of NCDs worldwide can be largely prevented”* but has no overarching goal to reduce preventable deaths.

Some Member States continue to object to referring to the global NCD problem as an “epidemic”, even in cases where their own health experts supported use of word “epidemic” in the declarations resulting from regional WHO consultations held prior to the Summit in Jakarta, Mexico and Oslo report. The reports from these meetings all use “epidemic” to convey the magnitude of the challenge, as does the Secretary-General’s own report on NCDs.

Issue 1: No overarching goal or commitment to reduce preventable deaths from NCDs

Action: Support the insertion of: **“With the goal of reducing preventable deaths from NCDs by 25% by 2025, we therefore commit ...”** into the Chapeau after para 33. This goal is proposed by the WHO Technical Working Group on targets and indicators¹

Issue 2: Resistance to the use of the word “epidemic”

Action: Support G77 in insisting on all current instances of “epidemic”, especially in the Chapeau after para 25

¹ http://www.who.int/nmh/events/moscow_ncds_2011/twg_targets_to_monitor_progress_reducing_ncds.pdf

WHAT GETS MEASURED GETS DONE

As WHO Director General, Dr Margaret Chan, stated at the First Global Ministerial Conference on NCDs and Healthy Lifestyles in Moscow in April 2011, *"Without global goals or targets, this is not going to fly – what gets measured gets done"*. The omission of targets continues to be a critical weakness in the draft Political Declaration.

- Issue 3:** Current language suggests the establishment and strengthening of national NCD plans and policies by 2013 only "as appropriate"
- Action:** Member States should include an indicator (e.g. 75% of countries by 2013) so that progress can be monitored and evaluated
- Issue 4:** At least one very important target was in an earlier draft but deleted from the July 29th draft after opposition from the EU, US and Canada. Norway proposed the following language on salt intake reduction:
- Continue working in partnerships with food producers and caterers to reduce the salt (sodium) content of foods and consider introducing restrictions for use of salt in the food industry in order to reduce salt consumption to 5g per person per day*
- This target was first recommended by WHO in 1983 (and reaffirmed many times since) and has widespread international support and scientific consensus. The World Heart Federation, a founding member of the NCD Alliance, has called on its members in more than 100 countries to ask that language on a salt target of less than 5g per person per day be reinstated
- Action:** Demand the reinstatement of the salt target and ask questions of your government as to the potential influence of sections of the food industry on the disappearance of this target from the draft
- Issue 5:** The draft calls for development of global targets and indicators on NCDs before the end of 2012, and *a comprehensive global monitoring framework, including a set of indicators ... to monitor trends and to assess progress made in the implementation of national strategies and plans on NCDs*. We need to make sure that civil society is involved in this process
- Action:** Call on Member States to support the current language but add that the process by which these targets, indicators and framework are designed must be transparent and open to input from independent experts, and is reported back to the UN not only the World Health Assembly

RESOURCES ARE NEEDED – EVEN IF A NEW UN AGENCY IS NOT NEEDED

The current language in the Political Declaration is very weak on resources. There is resistance from some donor countries to recognize the current lack of adequate resources for tackling NCDs and resistance to go beyond domestic resource provisioning (e.g. bilateral, regional, and multilateral). Language calls on Member States to *explore the provision of resources* and to *consider support for voluntary... approaches* to long-term financing.

- Issue 6:** Resistance to recognizing that more resources must be devoted to NCDs
- Action:** Support Chair's proposal for para 31 that recognizes that *resources devoted to ... NCDs ... are not commensurate with the magnitude of the problem*
- Action:** Strengthen relevant paras with single words that require action not vague intentions:
- Para 32: *Recognize the importance of strengthening ... capacities to address... NCDs ... in developing countries, and that this ~~may~~ will entail increased ... resources*
- Para 34a: ~~Explore the provision of~~ **Provide** ... resources, through domestic, bilateral, regional and multilateral channels ...

ACCESS TO ESSENTIAL MEDICINES AND TECHNOLOGIES

This is a key area of contention in the negotiations. The NCD Alliance believes it is critical to reference the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement (Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights) in the draft Political Declaration. It is currently in the text as proposed by the G77 and New Zealand but under pressure to be removed by the EU, US and Canada.

It is clear that the Doha Declaration applies to NCDs and is not limited to epidemics or emergencies. It reaffirms that, where necessary, World Trade Organization Members have the right to determine themselves what constitutes a national emergency or other circumstance of extreme urgency and that this is not constrained in any way by the type of diseases or conditions involved.

Issue 7: References to the Doha Declaration in paras 34h and 48bis are being contested

Action: Demand that Member States support direct references to the Doha Declaration

Issue 8: In spite of good evidence of the effectiveness of vaccinations that reduce cancers – Hepatitis B and HPV, several countries are opposing inclusion of text that would increase access and coverage as part of national immunization schedules (para 38k)

Action: Urge US, Canada, EU, Switzerland and EU to drop their opposition to this text

USE OF TAXATION TO REDUCE TOBACCO USE

In spite of good language in the first part of the draft recognizing the importance of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, important proposals on tobacco taxation are in danger of being deleted. Text proposed by Norway recognizes that this intervention is under-used as a source of government revenue but this simple fact is also being challenged – by the same donor countries that are arguing against any reference to the need for resources.

Issue 9: Text calling for FCTC implementation including *increased taxation and efforts to reduce availability*, proposed by Norway and Australia is being challenged by Japan, the EU, Canada and the US

Action: Support inclusion of all references to taxation and strong fiscal measures as an effective policy to address tobacco use and to raise government revenue

THE MEANS TO COORDINATE AND REVIEW GLOBAL WORK ON NCDs

The Declaration has weak language and little support for a high-level coordinating mechanism for action on NCDs. In para 56bis, the current text has:

Request the Secretary-General, in close collaboration with the Director-General of WHO, and in consultations with Member States, UN funds and programmes and other relevant international organizations, to submit by the end of 2012 to the 67th General Assembly, for consideration by Member States, options for strengthening and facilitating multisectoral action for the prevention and control of NCDs through effective partnership

Issue 10: Having recognized the scale and urgency of the NCD epidemic, it is unacceptable to wait another year to *consider options* for action

Action: Make sure your government knows that this failure to commit to any follow-up mechanism will be judged harshly by civil society organizations around the world

The next and last para of the draft builds on the commitment in the zero draft to have an annual report to the General Assembly by the Secretary-General. This is vitally important. Keeping NCDs on the UN agenda as well as on WHA's agenda will help build understanding of it as a development as well as a health priority. The NCD Alliance wants to see the next High-Level Meeting scheduled in September, and is therefore supporting the G77 proposal for a comprehensive review (crucially, not only an assessment) in 2014.

The current text for para 57 reads:

Request the Secretary-General, in collaboration with Member States, the WHO, and relevant funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the UN system to present to the General Assembly during the 68th session a report on the progress achieved in realizing the commitments made in this Political Declaration, including on the progress of multisectoral action, and the impact on the achievement of the IADGs, including the MDGs, in preparation for a comprehensive [review/assessment] in 2014 of the progress achieved in the prevention and control of NCDs.

Issue 11: The EU is understood to be against the 2014 review proposed by the G77. However the MDG Goals Review takes place in 2013, therefore 2014 would be an ideal date to conduct a review of outcomes of this HLM. It seems they are not in favour of any language that would result in a further High-Level Meeting in New York, preferring to have the WHA deal with the issue in Geneva

Action: Support the G77 call for comprehensive review (not only an assessment) to take place no later than 2014, and add language that makes it clear this will be at a High-Level Meeting at the General Assembly.