

Tel. direct: +41 22 791 2675 (Geneva)
Tel direct: +1 212 906 6359 (New York)
E-mail :

In reply please
refer to: HLM/NCD/UNDP/WHO

Your reference:

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Dear Colleagues,

As you are aware, a new and landmark agreement was adopted in September 2011, in the form of the Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the *Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs)*. This Political Declaration on NCDs is timely, and acknowledges the challenge of epidemic proportions that NCDs represent.

The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that in 2008, 36 million of the 57 million (63%) global deaths were due to non-communicable diseases, mainly cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes, including 9 million before the age of 60. These four diseases are largely preventable by means of effective interventions that tackle four risk factors, namely: tobacco use; harmful use of alcohol; unhealthy diet; and physical inactivity.

Deaths from NCDs in low- and middle-income countries are projected to rise by almost fifty per cent by 2030, with the largest increases projected for Sub-Saharan Africa, the Middle-East and South Asia. The rapidly increasing burden of these diseases is affecting the poor disproportionately. NCDs lead to increasing health care costs, while also impoverishing millions of households and disabling workers. They create barriers to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and to the elimination of human poverty. The cumulative projected costs in low- and middle-income countries associated with NCDs are estimated at US\$7 trillion over the period 2011-2025.

The growing international awareness that premature deaths from NCDs reduce productivity, curtail economic growth, and pose a significant social challenge in most countries means that they must be taken into account when the post-2015 development agenda is being devised.

Preliminary discussions with UN partners convened by WHO last December have elaborated further options for our collective action in support of the Political Declaration on NCDs. The identified actions are aligned with how we address today's key development challenges of reducing poverty and achieving inclusive growth and gender equality.

We propose that:

(1) The United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) integrate, according to country context and priorities, NCDs¹ into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) design processes and implementation, with initial attention being paid to the countries where UNDAF roll outs are scheduled for 2012-2013.

(2) The UNCTs design and implement joint NCDs programmes through UNDAFs considering the multi-sectoral nature of the response required, working with and beyond the health sector. This would in turn help to respond to the General Assembly's request for 'options for strengthening and facilitating multi-sectoral action for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases through effective partnerships' (paragraph 64).

(3) NCDs should, as mentioned above, be integrated into the MDG Acceleration Framework (MAF) efforts being carried out at the country level by UN Country Teams (UNCTs), including to inform and influence the global and national consultations for the post-2015 development agenda. The MAF can effectively build on existing global strategies endorsed by the governing bodies of the various organizations of the UN system.

To support this country-level work in a coordinated manner, WHO, members of the UN Development Group and the development banks will develop guidance notes and technical training materials as required, along with the provision of targeted technical support. In addition, WHO will continue its work on the development of a comprehensive global monitoring framework and targets for NCDs.

The development of a comprehensive approach to achieving improved health outcomes is best achieved by multiple sectors and constituencies. Such a comprehensive approach is essential to tackling NCDs and to advance human development.

¹ Including activities in relation to the implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), the first international treaty negotiated under the auspices of WHO

Our collective efforts in addressing HIV and AIDS provide us with lessons learned and precedents for best practice in how to engage jointly, for accelerated responses now, and to the long term challenges posed by NCDs.

We look forward to working with you closely as we take this agenda forward.

Yours sincerely,



Helen Clark
Administrator
United Nations Development Programme



Margaret Chan
Director-General
World Health Organization

