European Union
Statement

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Item 3.8 -
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

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EU Statement

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished Director-General,
Colleagues,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its Member States. The Candidate Countries Montenegro* and Albania*, and the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, align themselves with this statement.

We thank the Secretariat for the report, but we regret the gloomy overall picture given on progress despite significant results, in particular in the European Region. We welcome the Montevideo Roadmap, request the EB to take note of it as a contribution to the preparations of the High-Level Meeting on NCDs, and we thank Uruguay for kindly hosting us in their country. However, we are concerned that current efforts are insufficient to meet target 3.4. of the SDGs, and we call on WHO to support countries towards the attainment of the 9 global targets by 2025.

We reiterate the need for a comprehensive multi-sectoral response to non-communicable diseases that is rooted in our efforts to strengthen health systems to achieve universal health coverage, including through its due attention for promotive and preventive health services.

* Montenegro and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.
We need to improve and implement measures to ensure that primary health services can adapt to demographic change and to the need to address the growing prevalence of NCDs. This is to ensure healthcare system sustainability, but also to ensure that the prevention, early detection and effective management of chronic diseases in primary health services will improve people’s quality of life, through the availability of high quality treatment close to their homes, and prevention of unnecessary hospitalisation.

We would like to point out that the EU is also taking steps to tackle NCDs by focusing on the four main risk factors - physical inactivity, nutrition, tobacco and alcohol - as well as environment degradation and climate change. Access to education that promotes health literacy at all levels of society and contexts is a key determinant of health.

In December 2017, the EU adopted Council Conclusions on cross-border aspects in alcohol policy, focusing on cross-border issues such as, among others, labelling on ingredients and nutritional values, advertising through social media and the cross-border transport of alcoholic beverages. This could serve as a good practice model to follow, when discussing the WHO action on tackling NCDs.

Also, the implementation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and taking a firm line on tobacco control is vitally important to address this major cause of NCDs and health inequalities.

We need to strengthen the focus on mental health and we call on WHO to implement measures to improve mental health and wellbeing, address their social determinants and other health needs, respect the human rights of persons with mental health conditions and prevent suicides.

We welcome the work done by the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, in particular the development of a model policy on preventing tobacco industry interference. We urge WHO and the Director General to show leadership in expanding the use of the model policy to other members of the Task Force, such as the ILO, which continues to accept funds from the tobacco industry.
A WHO Independent Global High-level Commission on NCDs has been established. We take good note of this, but we seek more clarity on the tasks and positioning of this commission to deliver globally on NCDs.

We support the plan to convene a dialogue on how to finance national NCD responses in April 2018 (under the WHO Global Coordination Mechanism on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases).

We look forward to the Third High-Level Meeting of the General Assembly on NCDs in 2018 as a means to reaffirm the WHO leadership and to accelerate progress towards SDG 3.4. To this end, we ask the Secretariat to clarify the objectives and expected outcome of this third high-level meeting, as we have high expectations for an ambitious outcome.

As mentioned in document EB142/15, we also highlight the importance of engagement with non-state actors in view of their significant role for the advancement and promotion of the NCD agenda and for the achievement of SDG target 3.4. To this end, we also stress the importance of including NSAs and the communities affected by NCDs in the preparation for the HLM.

Thank you.