

Prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases

WHO's role in the preparation, implementation and follow-up to the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases (September 2011)

Report by the Secretariat

1. In May 2000, the Health Assembly in resolution WHA53.17 reaffirmed that the global strategy for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases¹ is directed at reducing premature mortality and improving quality of life, and requested the Director-General, inter alia, to continue giving priority to the prevention and control of such diseases. The strategy rests on three pillars: surveillance, primary prevention and strengthened health systems. Since 2000, several resolutions have been adopted in support of specific tools for the global strategy: the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control;² the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health;³ and the global strategy to reduce the harmful use of alcohol.⁴ A set of actions for tackling the public-health burden imposed by noncommunicable diseases was adopted by the Health Assembly in 2008 as the action plan for the global strategy for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases.⁵

2. The first objective in the action plan focuses on raising the priority of noncommunicable diseases in development work at global and national levels and on integrating prevention and control of such diseases into policies across all government departments. The far-reaching impacts of the epidemic and the breadth and complexity of its determinants require a response that extends beyond the health sector; sectors falling under the responsibility of, for example, ministries of agriculture, trade, finance, labour and education, need to be involved.

¹ See document A53/14.

² Resolution WHA56.1.

³ Resolution WHA57.17.

⁴ Resolution WHA63.13.

⁵ Resolution WHA61.14; for the text of the action plan, see document WHA61/2008/REC/1, Annex 3.

HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

3. Underscoring the need for concerted action to address the developmental challenges posed by noncommunicable diseases, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 64/265, in which it (a) decided to convene a high-level meeting of the General Assembly in September 2011, with the participation of Heads of State and Government, on the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases; (b) also decided to hold consultations on the scope, modalities, format and organization of the high-level meeting on the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases, with a view to concluding consultations preferably before the end of 2010; (c) encouraged Member States to include in their discussions at the high-level plenary meeting of the sixty-fifth session of the General Assembly on the review of the Millennium Development Goals, to be held in September 2010, the rising incidence and the socioeconomic impact of the high prevalence of noncommunicable diseases worldwide; and (d) requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session, in collaboration with Member States, WHO and the relevant funds, programmes and specialized agencies of the United Nations system, on the global status of noncommunicable diseases, with a particular focus on the developmental challenges faced by developing countries.

4. The implementation of the actions set for the Secretariat under objective one of the action plan for the global strategy for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases has received high priority since the endorsement of the action plan in May 2008. Information on the activities implemented and the chronology of the main events which led to the adoption of resolution 64/265 is provided in the Annex.

THE PROCESS LEADING TO THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING

5. The General Assembly resolution has thus laid the way for a global effort to consider the developmental impact of noncommunicable diseases and has created an opportunity for Heads of State and Government in developed and developing countries to consider stronger, more coordinated actions in response to noncommunicable diseases. The next stages of the preparatory process leading to the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly will include the initiatives described below.

Co-Facilitators

6. On 14 October 2010, the President of the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly appointed the Permanent Representatives of Jamaica and Luxembourg to the United Nations in New York to serve as Co-Facilitators and to lead consultations on the scope, modalities, format and organization of the high-level meeting, with a view to introducing a draft resolution to the United Nations General Assembly.

Regional high-level consultations

7. WHO, as well as the United Nations programmes and funds, the specialized agencies of the United Nations system, the regional commissions of the United Nations, and the Bretton Woods institutions, may be invited to hold regional consultations, as appropriate, during the second half of 2010 and the first half of 2011. This process will feed into the preparations for the high-level meeting, and into the meeting itself. Regional meetings will be hosted by interested Member States for the countries of their regions during the last quarter of 2010 and the first quarter of 2011. The hosting

country will prepare a summary of the regional consultations as a contribution to the high-level meeting. The regional meetings will be supported by WHO.

Ministerial conference

8. The Russian Federation is organizing the First Global Ministerial Conference on Noncommunicable Diseases and Healthy Lifestyles, to be held in Moscow on 28 and 29 April 2011. The Conference will be hosted by the Ministry of Healthcare and Social Development of the Russian Federation and will be jointly organized with WHO. The Conference is designed to facilitate discussion of approaches and mechanisms for scaling up action to prevent and control noncommunicable diseases, and identify ways to include the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases as an integral part of work on global development and of related investment decisions, in accordance with the action plan for the global strategy for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases. It is expected to provide a contribution to the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly.

Informal dialogues with civil society and the private sector

9. WHO has organized informal consultations with representatives of nongovernmental and civil society organizations and the private sector; a summary of the informal dialogues will be prepared as a contribution to the high-level meeting.

Reports on the global status of noncommunicable diseases

10. In accordance with the action plan for the global strategy for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases, WHO has prepared a report on the global status of noncommunicable diseases, which will be released during the first quarter of 2011. The report will present trends observed in noncommunicable diseases and their determinants in all Member States and will analyse the data and information collected in more than 180 Member States on their capacity to prevent and control noncommunicable diseases. It is envisaged that the WHO report will contribute to the preparation of the report of the United Nations Secretary-General to the United Nations General Assembly on the global status of noncommunicable diseases, as requested in resolution 64/265 above. The report of the United Nations Secretary-General will be drafted in close collaboration with Member States, WHO and the relevant programmes, funds and specialized agencies of the United Nations system. In addition, the Secretariat has been working with Member States in building, and disseminating information about, the evidence base for informing policy-makers on the relationship between noncommunicable diseases, poverty and development, including the links to the health-related Millennium Development Goals. Several discussion papers have been prepared and considered at international and regional events.

Informal hearings and consultations

11. In accordance with the modalities for the high-level meeting to be specified in the draft resolution mentioned above (see paragraph 6), the President of the General Assembly may be requested to continue to hold open, inclusive, timely and transparent consultations with all Member States and other relevant stakeholders, as appropriate, with a view to reaching the broadest possible agreement on all major issues relating to the high-level meeting, including the adoption of a concise and action-oriented outcome to be agreed by Member States. Similarly, the President of the General Assembly may be requested to organize, in consultation with representatives of nongovernmental organizations in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council, civil

society organizations and the private sector, informal interactive hearings to provide input into the process of preparing for the high-level meeting.

The high-level meeting on the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases

12. The high-level meeting will be convened in September 2011 with the participation of Heads of State and Government. The organization of the plenary meeting for the high-level meeting will be included in the draft resolution on modalities. It is envisaged that the President of the General Assembly at its sixty-fifth session and the President of the sixty-sixth session will preside jointly over the high-level meeting. It is expected that the meeting will result in the adoption of a final outcome document that will generate global momentum and commitment both to implement the global strategy for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases and its associated action plan, and to include the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases as an integral part of the global development agenda and in related investment decisions.

ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

13. The Board is invited to note the report.

ANNEX

**CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS CULMINATING IN THE ADOPTION OF
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY RESOLUTION 64/265**

May 2000	The Health Assembly adopts resolution WHA53.17, reaffirming that the global strategy for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases is directed at reducing premature mortality and improving quality of life, and providing a global vision for tackling noncommunicable diseases.
September 2002	The World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August – 4 September) commits itself to a plan of implementation that calls for the development of preventive and curative programmes to address noncommunicable diseases and their risk factors.
May 2003	The Health Assembly adopts the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.
May 2004	The Health Assembly endorses the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health.
December 2006	United Nations General Assembly adopts resolution 61/225, encouraging Member States to develop national policies for the prevention, treatment and care of diabetes.
September 2007	Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community, meeting at a special CARICOM Summit on Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases (Port-of-Spain, 15 September) issues a declaration entitled “Uniting to stop the epidemic of chronic NCDs”.
May 2008	The Health Assembly endorses the action plan for the global strategy for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases, which provides a roadmap for Member States, the Secretariat and international partners.
April 2009	A regional ministerial meeting for Asia and the Pacific on the theme “Promoting health literacy” is held in Beijing on 29 and 30 April 2009 as part of the preparatory process for the Annual Ministerial Review of the United Nations Economic and Social Council. The meeting issues recommendations that include accelerating actions to combat noncommunicable diseases through health literacy, including the use of low-cost, simple but effective health education interventions.
May 2009	The ECOSOC/UNESCWA/UNDESA/WHO Western Asia Ministerial Meeting is held in Doha on 10 and 11 May on the theme “Addressing noncommunicable diseases and injuries: major challenges to sustainable development in the 21st century.” Participants adopt the Doha Declaration on NCDs and Injuries, which calls for the integration of evidence-based indicators on noncommunicable diseases and injuries into the core monitoring and evaluation system for the Millennium Development Goals.

July 2009	During the general debate of the United Nations Economic and Social Council's High-level Segment (Geneva, 6–9 July) national and international leaders call on global development initiatives to take into account the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases and suggest that the United Nations General Assembly convene a high-level meeting on noncommunicable diseases. During the Ministerial Roundtable Breakfast on noncommunicable diseases, organized by WHO, a number of countries try to secure support to integrate indicators on noncommunicable diseases into the core monitoring and evaluation systems of the Millennium Development Goals. A Ministerial Declaration is subsequently adopted, calling for urgent action to implement the global strategy for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases and the action plan.
November 2009	The Commonwealth Heads of State and Government, gathered at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Port-of-Spain from 27 to 29 November, issue a statement on Commonwealth action to combat noncommunicable diseases.
May 2010	The United Nations General Assembly, at its sixty-fourth session, unanimously adopts resolution 64/265 on the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases. The resolution is cosponsored by 78 Member States, as well as by Cameroon on behalf of the Group of African States.
September 2010	In the outcome document of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the sixty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly on the Millennium Development Goals, Heads of State and Government commit themselves to strengthening “the effectiveness of health systems and proven interventions to address evolving health challenges, including the increased incidence of noncommunicable diseases” and to undertaking “concerted action and a coordinated response at the national, regional and global levels in order to adequately address the developmental and other challenges posed by noncommunicable diseases”.

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