



Statement of Ireland

77th session of the World Health Assembly

Item 11.2 Follow-up to the political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases

28th May 2024

Honourable Chair,

Distinguished Delegates,

Ireland aligns with the statement delivered by Belgium on behalf of the European Union and its Member States.

Ireland welcomes the report by the Director General and agenda item 11.2, follow-up to the political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases.

Improving life expectancy is one of humanity's greatest achievements, but it has brought with it many new challenges for our health systems, including greater burdens of non-communicable diseases. Re-orientating our health systems to meet these challenges requires a shift in mind-set and organization, to build up person-centered and integrated care to deliver "Health for All".

Ireland supports a settings-based approach to health promotion, maximising disease prevention by utilising a whole systems approach and addressing the wider determinants of health. This approach has the

potential to increase effectiveness by focusing on settings as channels for interventions while taking account of the social, economic, environmental, and organisational factors that influence health.

We have made considerable strides in modernising our mental health services. We were one of the first countries to implement a whole-of-Government suicide-prevention strategy. Recognising the profound psychological impact of social media and unregulated screen time on younger people, we are taking a coordinated approach to tackling online safety.

Another area of focus for Ireland has been tobacco. Smoking continues to kill 4,500 of our people each year and causes an enormous range of illnesses, including 13% of all cancers, as well as significant economic costs. In 2023 the Public Health (Tobacco Products and Nicotine Inhaling Products) Act was enacted. A major feature of that law is a licensing system for tobacco products and nicotine inhaling product retailers. Government approval has been received recently to increase the minimum legal age of sale of tobacco products from 18 to 21.

In addition, Ireland recognises that the burden of cardiovascular disease can be significantly reduced through evidence-based prevention and control measures. Ireland's GP Chronic Disease Management Programme commenced in 2020 and has been fully rolled out from 2023. The programme aims to prevent and manage chronic diseases in the community; for cardiovascular disease, it does so by improving heart health, reducing the risk and incidence of heart attack and stroke, and preventing subsequent cardiovascular events or complications in those who have heart problems or stroke.

Ireland welcomes the spotlight that the WHO has placed on addressing obesity with the endorsement of the WHO Acceleration Plan to Stop Obesity in 2022 and the launch of the WHO "Health Service Delivery

Framework for Prevention and Management of Obesity” at the European Congress on Obesity in 2023 which was held in Dublin. Our own national Obesity Policy and Action Plan is a ten-step programme to address obesity through a range of actions, including health promotion, education and prevention of overweight and obesity, actions to manage and treat obesity within our health services and actions that relate to improving the wider obesogenic environment. Ireland recognises that tackling the growth in obesity is critical to achieving the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) target 3.4: to reduce by one third premature mortality from NCDs by 2030

Finally, Ireland supports the inclusion of all NCDS and primary care in the UHC package and is especially pleased that oral health has been specifically highlighted as an essential addition ensuring that oral diseases are embedded as a priority in the new NCD agenda.

Thank You

ENDS