

Draft 1

Seventy-eight World Health Assembly Kingdom of Tonga Intervention

Committee A- Pillar 1: One Billion people benefiting from Universal Health Coverage (UHC)

Agenda Item 13: Review and update on matters considered by the Executive Board

Agenda Item 13.1: Follow up to the political declaration of the 3rd high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of NCDs

Dot Point 1: Reducing the burden of NCDs through strengthening prevention and control of diabetes (Resolution WHA 74.4 (2021))

Thank you, Chairperson.

1. **The Kingdom of Tonga** is pleased to note the Report: ***Reducing the burden of NCDs through strengthening prevention and control of diabetes (Resolution WHA 74.4 (2021)).***
2. The Government and people of Tonga greatly value the leadership and coordination that **WHO** provides in addressing the burden of NCDs.
3. Tonga is home to 105,000 people where 83% of deaths are from NCDs.
4. The top 4 causes of deaths are:
 - a. Cardiovascular Diseases (29%)
 - b. Cancers (19%)
 - c. Diabetes (14%)
 - d. Chronic Respiratory Diseases (7%)
5. 48% of NCD deaths occur in the under 70-year-olds and the probability of premature death from NCD is 27%.
6. The last STEPS survey (2017) reported that 99.9% of Tongans engage in behaviours (exposed to 1-2 risk factors) that put them at risk of developing NCDs.
7. There is much work to be done to address the many lifestyle changes needed to help control Diabetes, including promoting regular exercise, eating smaller servings of food as part of a well-balanced diet, and having tools and support available to manage and reduce stress.

8. Tonga recognises the need to review and implement health-promoting legislation and frameworks on alcohol, tobacco, and sugar sweetened beverages.
9. We need to work smarter with other government agencies to finalize legislation including; Amendment of the Intoxicating Liquor Act; the Tobacco Control Bill 2023; the Tobacco Control Regulations 2024 and review of the School Food Policy 2020-2025.
10. We need to improve the capacity of our healthcare workers using the **WHO** HEARTS/NCD Training Package to provide a higher quality of primary health care services for NCDs and we must improve NCD health literacy at community level.
11. Some of the key challenges we face in our efforts to enhance meaningful engagement of people living with NCDs: include
 - a. Lack of trust in the health system which results in late presentation
 - b. Lack of understanding of the need to follow through with medications prescribed for Diabetes
 - c. Defaulting follow up appointments to review blood sugar levels
 - d. Using traditional medicine as a first line approach to the onset of illness
 - e. Cultural beliefs around the need for food abundance at social events.
12. We need to work smarter and more frequently with a range of community groups including our youth, faith-based organisations, CSOs and NGOs to find locally acceptable solutions to the aforementioned challenges.
13. **WHO** and development partners can best support Tonga to implement and sustain multisectoral actions across government sectors by supporting evidenced based policy development and in-country healthcare worker training.
14. Thank you to **WHO** and our development partners for your continuous support for The Kingdom of Tonga

MALO 'AUPITO AND THANK YOU

WORD COUNT: 441