

WHO
79th World Health Assembly

NB8 statement on items 12.1 NCDs and 12.2. Mental Health

Chair, distinguished delegates,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Iceland, Latvia, Lithuania, Norway and Sweden.

Non-communicable diseases remain the leading cause of premature mortality worldwide. They continue to place growing pressure on health systems, economies, societies, and individuals through reduced quality of life and rising healthcare costs. Despite progress, most countries are still not on track to achieve global NCD targets.

We need stronger action on population-level prevention to reduce the burden of noncommunicable diseases. This includes promoting healthier diets and physical activity and reducing harm caused by tobacco, nicotine products, and alcohol. We must also address environmental and commercial drivers of poor health. Effective measures include health taxes and limiting the marketing of harmful products, especially to children and vulnerable groups. These actions improve public health, lower healthcare costs, and benefit the whole population.

Reducing health inequalities must remain at the heart of the NCD agenda. Vulnerable and lower-income groups are more affected by NCDs and often face greater barriers to prevention, early diagnosis, and treatment. Stronger population-wide measures are needed not only to reduce the overall burden of NCDs, but also to close long-standing health gaps.

Many mental health conditions and their risk factors — such as high stress, lack of sleep, low autonomy, and financial insecurity — are more common among women and girls. At the same time, we cannot overlook the growing trend of mental health problems among youth and older people. Factors such as domestic violence, loneliness, poverty, substance use, and harmful use of social media can further harm wellbeing. This is why we need a stronger Mental Health in All Policies approach to promote mental health and wellbeing across society.

The current global situation also reminds us of the importance of preparedness. Healthy populations and strong social cohesion help societies withstand pandemics, conflict, and climate change. Health systems must be resilient in crises. Mental health, psychosocial support, and continuity of care for NCDs must be part of emergency response. Combating misinformation is also crucial.

Excellencies,

To make real progress, we must invest more in prevention, reduce inequalities, and treat mental health and NCDs as closely connected priorities. We need stronger action and sustain political commitment.

Thank You