



WHA 79 South Africa Intervention

18-23 May 2026

Agenda Item 12.1: Follow-up to the political declaration of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs)

Chairperson,

1. South Africa welcomes document A79/5 and the progress reported toward the Fourth High-Level Meeting on NCDs. We reaffirm that NCDs remain a primary challenge to our pursuit of Universal Health Coverage, and their management is a core priority of our National Health Insurance (NHI) framework.
2. South Africa strongly supports Resolution EB158.R1. We have formalized this commitment through our updated Strategic and Implementation Framework for Cervical Cancer Elimination (2026–2030). Every two minutes, a woman dies from this preventable disease; in South Africa, it remains a leading cause of cancer deaths, disproportionately impacting women living with HIV who face a six-fold higher risk.
3. To change its trajectory, South Africa has fully embraced the WHO single-dose HPV vaccine schedule, sustaining school-based campaigns that reach over 1.5 million girls annually. Crucially, South Africa is undergoing a complete national transition away from cytology to primary molecular HPV-DNA based screening, alongside the introduction of cervico-vaginal self-sampling to overcome systemic barriers. By decentralized scale-up of thermal ablation at the primary healthcare (PHC) level and task-sharing with trained nurses, we are binding secondary prevention directly into our NHI backbone to ensure no woman is left behind.
4. We welcome Decision EB158(1) regarding childhood obesity. South Africa has been a proud pioneer of front-of-pack labelling and fiscal measures, such as our health promotion levy, to curb the NCD epidemic. Here, the "Economics of Health for All" must be realized: we must move from merely "fixing market failures" to actively "shaping markets" through regulatory intervention, prioritizing child health over the commercial interests of the food and beverage industry.

5. We endorse Decision EB158(2) to strengthen the intersection between maternal health and NCDs. Effectively managing hypertension and diabetes during pregnancy is critical to reducing maternal mortality. Our integrated NHI clinical pathways ensure that NCD prevention, screening, and chronic care begin at the earliest stages of life.
6. Chairperson, sustainable NCD responses require resilient domestic financing and a fundamental shift in macroeconomic thinking. We must view NCD investments not as fiscal line-item expenditures to be minimized, but as high-yield investments in our collective human capital.
7. In conclusion, South Africa calls for the upcoming Political Declaration to be strictly action oriented. It must aggressively advance technology transfer for NCD diagnostics and local production, while fiercely protecting national policy spaces against commercial interference.

Thank you.