

Mobilising the world for chronic NCDs



The Lancet's third Series on chronic diseases and development, starting today, comes at a crucial crossroads in the fight against non-communicable diseases. In 9 months' time, the world will have a historic opportunity to give these diseases the recognition and response they deserve when UN member states gather in New York for the first UN High-level Meeting on non-communicable diseases in September, 2011.¹

To ensure we make the most of this unprecedented opportunity, our Federations, as the unique global voice encompassing the four priority non-communicable diseases (cancers, cardiovascular diseases, chronic respiratory diseases, and diabetes) as defined by WHO, have united to form the NCD Alliance.² The International Diabetes Federation, the Union for International Cancer Control, the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease, and the World Heart Federation together are driving a global civil-society movement united to address non-communicable diseases and their common risk factors of tobacco use, unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, and harmful use of alcohol. The NCD Alliance was one of the earliest voices calling for a UN High-level Meeting on non-communicable diseases in May, 2009. Under the impressive leadership of Caribbean Community (CARICOM) member states, the Alliance has worked with a wide range of partners and allies to coordinate the global advocacy effort which led to its unanimous passage.

Non-communicable diseases have been a silent killer for too long. They are a major cause of poverty, a barrier to economic development, and a serious threat to achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The 9 million deaths such diseases cause in people younger than 60 years of age each year in low-income and middle-income countries represent nothing less than a development emergency in slow motion.³ If governments and aid agencies continue to ignore this threat, we will sleepwalk into a future in which healthy people will be in a minority, obese and unhealthy children die before their parents, and economic development and already vulnerable health systems are overwhelmed. Non-communicable diseases have no borders or boundaries—they are the world's number one killer⁴ and devastate the bottom billion and G20 countries alike.

We can no longer afford to separate non-communicable diseases from the global agendas on the eradication of poverty, maternal health, health-systems strengthening, and infectious diseases such as AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria. Their causes and outcomes are linked—and so too are the solutions. This was recognised by all 192 UN Member States at the MDG Summit this past September, when Heads of State issued an outcomes statement committing to accelerating progress towards achieving MDG 6 on AIDS, malaria, and other diseases through “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 non-communicable diseases”.⁵ We must hold world leaders to account on this promise, and ensure that this commitment is reflected in the priorities and spending of overseas aid agencies.

Since the UN Meeting was announced in May, 2010, the NCD Alliance and its partners have been hard at work putting into action the plans and structures needed to deliver strong outcomes from the summit. The NCD Alliance is asking governments to allocate more resources to improve prevention, early detection, diagnosis, treatment, and care in non-communicable diseases, and to invest in robust and measurable national control plans for such diseases. We want ratification and full implementation by governments of WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and effective actions on diet, physical activity, risks and their determinants related to non-communicable diseases, and action from global to local levels on the prevention of these diseases.

Published Online
November 11, 2010
DOI:10.1016/S0140-6736(10)61891-0

See Online/Series
DOI:10.1016/S0140-6736(10)61414-6,
DOI:10.1016/S0140-6736(10)61352-9,
DOI:10.1016/S0140-6736(10)61514-0,
DOI:10.1016/S0140-6736(10)61353-0, and
DOI:10.1016/S0140-6736(10)61853-3



A key summit deliverable will be agreement on a global price tag to implement the solutions, building on the results of the second Series⁶ and the data in the third paper of this Series.⁷ We have evidence on the cost of these diseases—now we must cost the global solutions. Non-communicable diseases need to be built into global development targets, particularly the successor goals to the MDGs after the current goals expire in 2015. Finally, we must work tirelessly to ensure that the outcomes statement from the UN Meeting contains measurable commitments for which leaders can be held to account.

As a group of federations representing over 880 member associations in 170 countries, we believe that a broad and unified civil-society movement is essential to a successful summit. We are pleased to announce the formation of the NCD Alliance Common Interest Group (CIG),⁸ which will provide a platform of engagement for non-governmental organisations and create a powerful network to raise the profile of non-communicable diseases. Through this group, the Alliance will inform, engage, and mobilise by providing campaign materials, news updates, a platform to share ideas, establishing working groups, and holding regular teleconference briefings. The CIG can be joined by visiting the NCD Alliance website.⁶

This *Lancet* Series highlights not only the many challenges ahead in successfully addressing the global burden of non-communicable diseases, but also shows the impressive progress we have made over the previous decade. We must continue to build on this progress and ensure the UN High-level Meeting moves beyond

rhetoric and produces concrete outcomes. We will have only one chance to dialogue with the world's leaders and heads of state on non-communicable diseases in September, 2011. We have the arguments, evidence, and solutions, further strengthened by determination and political will. For us, the High-level Meeting is an unprecedented opportunity.

Jean Claude Mbanya, S B Squire, Eduardo Cazap, Pekka Puska

President, International Diabetes Federation, Brussels, Belgium (JCM); President, International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease, Paris, France (SBS); President, Union for International Cancer Control, Geneva, Switzerland (EC); and President, World Heart Federation, Geneva, Switzerland (PP) correspondence@ncdalliance.org

We declare that we have no conflicts of interest.

- 1 Department of Public Information, UN. Press conference on General Assembly decision to convene Summit in September 2011 on non-communicable diseases. http://www.un.org/News/briefings/docs/2010/100513_Diseases.doc.htm. May 13, 2010 (accessed Oct 6, 2010).
- 2 The NCD Alliance. <http://www.ncdalliance.org/node/9> (accessed Oct 6, 2010).
- 3 WHO. The global burden of disease: 2004 update. 2008. <http://www.who.int/evidence/bod> (accessed Oct 7, 2010).
- 4 WHO. Preventing chronic diseases: a vital investment: WHO global report. 2005. http://www.who.int/chp/chronic_disease_report/en (accessed Oct 4, 2010).
- 5 UN. Keeping the promise: united to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. Sept 17, 2010. <http://www.un.org/en/mdg/summit2010/pdf/mdg%20outcome%20document.pdf> (accessed Oct 1, 2010).
- 6 Horton R. Chronic diseases: the case for urgent global action. *Lancet* 2007; **370**: 1881–82.
- 7 Cecchini M, Sassi F, Lauer JA, et al. Tackling of unhealthy diets, physical inactivity, and obesity: health effects and cost-effectiveness. *Lancet* 2010; published online Nov 11. DOI:10.1016/S0140-6736(10)61514-0.
- 8 The NCD Alliance. Join the NCD Alliance Common Interest Group. <http://www.ncdalliance.org/node/3183> (accessed Oct 6, 2010).