



Remarks

by

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President of the 68th Session of the United Nations

General Assembly

**Informal interactive hearing with non-governmental organizations,
civil society organizations, the private sector and academia on the
prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs)**

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Excellencies,
Dr. Oleg Chestnov,
Ambassador Sally Cowal,
Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to welcome you to this informal interactive hearing on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

Today we will discuss a phenomenon that surely affects everyone in this room. We all know someone who is afflicted by a non-communicable disease. Homes and communities across every region of the world know this burden, whether it is in the form of cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes or chronic respiratory disease. An African proverb says “it takes a village” to raise a child, but the same can be said regarding our approach to the health challenges confronting us. It takes a village to prevent and control non-communicable disease (NCDs). Thus, broader community-based engagement is key, and I thank you for your participation today.

Today’s hearing and its overarching theme: *Global Progress, National Action: Moving from commitment to implementation* serves an important purpose. Foremost, it provides non-governmental organizations, civil society, the private sector and academia with the opportunity to share experiences and perspectives in the prevention and control of NCDs; at the same time, it is also a forum to make specific recommendations for the consideration of Member States at the comprehensive review and assessment to be held next month. As NCDs are one of the major challenges for development in the twenty-first century, both of these meetings also offer a timely forum to promote the consideration of this important issue in the post-2015 development agenda.

Excellencies,

We are now three years after the adoption in 2011 of the landmark Political Declaration of the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable disease. Through the World Health Organization’s

Global Action Plan and Comprehensive Global Monitoring Framework, the international community has a clear roadmap to combat the threat of NCDs.

The implementation of this roadmap at all levels must be a priority and augmented by the ongoing work and collaborative efforts of non-governmental organizations and civil society, as well as by the commitment of the private sector. Your continued efforts to raise awareness about NCDs and to strengthen action at the global, regional and national levels have resulted in tremendous progress. We see the fruits of your labour in the relabeling of food products, the reduction in salt content in food products, and in more responsible marketing of foods and non-alcohol beverages to children.

The probability of dying from any of the major NCDs between the ages of 30 and 70 years ranges from 10 per cent in developed countries to 60 per cent in developing countries. This stark contrast not only suggests the depth and disparity of the problem, but is also a reminder that global solutions will require the support of all relevant stakeholders. No one entity working in silo, be it a public or private entity, can tackle the global burden and challenges of NCDs alone.

As civil society, you are well-placed to mobilize the necessary political will, public awareness and support in the fight against NCDs. However, you also have the important role of ensuring promises are kept. For NCDs, reaching commitments and observing global goals, targets and indicators is facilitated by organizations such as WHO, with assistance from local NGOs. Together, this assessment of progress can bring the appropriate pressure to bear on governments in order to accelerate prevention and treatment for NCDs.

This watchdog role is not only directed toward governments. Civil society must monitor the interactions among their own organizations and the relationship between government and the private sector to ensure that there are no conflicts of interest, and to agitate when private sector actions are opposed to the prevention and control of NCDs. The multiple interests in any society that bear on NCDs create the need to insist on transparency and accountability. But this does not mean that there is not a

place for private sector in the NCD response: in fact, there must be engagement by all sectors.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Throughout this 68th session of the General Assembly, I have stressed the importance of an inclusive and transformative post-2015 development agenda. One way to bring about this transformation is through the active and constructive engagement of civil society. As I stated at the interactive briefing I convened with civil society this past February, you and your organizations are the trusted partners of the United Nations and are important contributors to the multilateral system.

Along with the three High-level events and three thematic debates that I convened over the last six months, as well as several other processes mandated by various General Assembly resolutions, this interactive hearing provides an additional example of how we as an international community can move our commitment for an inclusive, transformative and dynamic post-2015 agenda from principle to reality, with global health as a priority.

As outlined in the concept note, today's interactive hearing seeks to answer several important questions, which relate to contributions of civil society to date; items to be considered for inclusion in the Outcome Document to be adopted in July 2014; best practices and lessons learned; how to expand/improve the capacity of civil society; and ways to prioritize NCDs in global and national development agendas, including the post-2015 development agenda.

I have no doubt that you will provide very thoughtful and informative answers to these questions, and that our Interactive Hearing will make important contributions to the High-level review and assessment.

Thank you.
