

**Opening Remarks by**

**HE Sheikh Hamad Bin Jassim Bin Jabor Al-Thani  
Prime Minister & Minister of Foreign Affairs,  
State of Qatar**

**At the Opening Session of**

**Western Asia Regional Ministerial Meeting On**

**“Addressing non-communicable diseases and injuries: major  
challenges for the 21st century”**

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**Delivered By**

**HE Abdulla Bin Khaled Al-Qahtani  
Minister of Health & Secretary General,  
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**Mr. Chairman**

**I have the pleasure to welcome you to Doha, the Capital City of Qatar, which hosts the Annual Western Asia Ministerial Review Meeting, being held to discuss certain issues prior to 2009 Review Session to be held by ECOSOC in Geneva. This meeting is part of the valuable and persistent efforts exerted by the United Nations and the World Community during the last two decades for controlling the non communicable diseases all over the world and reducing their passive impact on the socio-economic development. The meeting also calls upon decision makers and representatives of the private sector, the civil society and all concerned circles, to work closely with the United Nations System for achieving the objectives and goals stated in the UN Agenda regarding public health, and to deal in an effective and proper way with all the health issues presented by the world community.**

**This meeting, as well, reflects the outstanding world status gained by Qatar by the wise directives of HH Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of Qatar, which manifest a deep sense of accountability and solidarity towards all the persistent issues and a commitment to spare no effort for urging the world community to place health issues at the top of its priorities, and maximize its efforts to deal effectively with non communicable diseases and all other diseases that threaten nations' stability and economic growth.**

**Mr. Chairman**

**No one can contradict the fact that the rapid prevalence of non communicable diseases, such as diabetes, cardio vascular diseases and cancer, poses a very heavy burden on the budget of countries suffering their spread among their peoples. In addition to their burden on the budget, their prevalence has a grave impact on the economic growth of these countries, particularly if we realize the fact that the early deaths caused by such diseases affect negatively on the man power and human resources required for marching ahead towards achieving socio-economic development.**

Much more worrying is the potential accelerating prevalence of health problems in the near coming years and the gradual increase in the average of death and disability all over the world. According to WHO reports, 17% increase in the number of deaths resulting of non communicable diseases will occur within the period 2006-2015. The highest ratio of these deaths shall occur in the low and medium income countries, particularly in Africa, Southern Sahara, Mediterranean and South East Asia. Without timely overall mobilization of the world community resources, it will be very difficult to proceed on with the major efforts to eradicate poverty, as all available statistics and evidence show that the deprived and poor people are those who suffer much from the non communicable diseases. This certainly adds to their burdens and to the deterioration of their living standard, particularly if we take into account the heavy costs pertaining to the treatment of these diseases which often lead to impoverish the families whose members are inflicted with these diseases.

Mr. Chairman

Considering the aforesaid facts, it is high time for the world community and the representatives of the private sector, the civil society and all concerned circles to intensify their efforts for reducing the prevalence of non communicable diseases and their impact on the economic development process. However, there are certain indicators that prove that the world active forces are very well aware of the need to deal more seriously and effectively with these diseases. According to the WHO world survey on the progress achieved through the national strategies for controlling and preventing non communicable diseases, many health ministries include certain departments concerned with these diseases, and many countries allocate specific budgets to address them and develop action plans to protect against tobacco, cardio vascular diseases and cancer .

However, this great concern given by several countries towards non communicable diseases does not yield the cherished results. More often the concerned countries are either short of the financial resources required for implementing their plans, or miss

**the monitoring mechanisms required for assessing the progress of the adopted policies or detecting the gaps in the methods of dealing with such diseases.**

**In this regard, I call upon all the UN Member States, the major active world economic players and the civil society to double their efforts and to work closely together to help alleviate the sufferings of the developing and least developed countries whose populations are inflicted by non communicable diseases and reduce the burden they pose on their budgets and their economic development process.**

**I also seize this opportunity to emphasize the fact that the most effective tool for dealing with these diseases is to launch extensive awareness campaigns at the national and international levels with the aim of educating the public about the importance of following healthy diets and proper nutrition habits that can help them avoid infection. Priority should also be given to developing and strengthening national programs and policies to protect against non communicable diseases and to conducting research to that target. The best practices and expertise in the field should also be exchanged among countries in order to enable the developing and least developed countries make the best use of them in the field of non communicable diseases control and prevention.**

**I am quite confident that intensive efforts by all society components and solidarity among all world active players in the field are the most efficacious tools for achieving progress with regard to non communicable diseases control and prevention.**

**In this context, allow me to confirm that the State of Qatar shall always be there in the right place and time and shall spare no effort to contribute effectively in addressing all the health issues facing the world community.**

**Thank you.**