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In reply please
refer to: HLM/ NCD/UNDP/WHO

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Dear Colleagues,

On 26 March 2012, we wrote to you proposing that United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) integrate, according to country context and priorities, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) design processes and implementation. This was in response to the acknowledgement that the growing global burden of NCDs constitutes one of the major challenges for development in the twenty-first century, and in light of the commitments set forth in the September 2011 UN *Political Declaration on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases*.

Today, we write to you following the recent release of the *Note by the Secretary-General transmitting the report of the Director-General of the World Health Organization on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases*.¹ The report underscores that some remarkable advances have been made since September 2011. However, overall progress has been insufficient and highly uneven and bolder measures are needed for achieving a world free of the avoidable burden of NCDs.

We reiterate the importance of continuing to mainstream NCDs into UNDAFs; a preliminary review of 109 UNDAFs in April 2013 showed that 52 (48%) included action to prevent and control NCDs. Only twenty-two (20%) of these specifically highlighted tobacco prevention and control. While trends are encouraging, there is still a long way to go.

We also highlight two significant developments during 2013 regarding NCDs that facilitate the work of the United Nations System.

Firstly, WHO, based on the *Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases 2013-2020* endorsed by the World Health Assembly in May 2013, and on regional plans, has developed a global NCD framework with clear targets and

¹ http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A%2F68%2F650+&Submit=Search&Lang=E

accountabilities. More broadly, the WHO Global Action Plan comprises a set of actions which, when performed collectively by Member States, international partners and WHO, will achieve the global target of a 25% reduction in premature mortality from NCDs by 2025 and attain the commitments made in the Political Declaration.

Secondly, on 22 July 2013, in a resolution co-signed by 104 Member States, ECOSOC requested the Secretary-General to establish a UN Interagency Task Force (IATF) on the Prevention and Control of NCDs² to coordinate the activities of relevant UN funds, programmes and specialized agencies and other intergovernmental organizations to support the realization of the commitments made in the Political Declaration, in particular through the implementation of the WHO Global Action Plan, including the implementation of the *WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control*, which now has 177 Parties. This Task Force, convened by WHO, is now operational and ready to support UN technical assistance and Member State design and implementation of comprehensive NCD responses.

As we commit to a coherent UN System response, UNCTs are now encouraged to:

- (1) Accelerate the development of multi-sectoral joint programmes on the prevention and control of NCDs with a clear determination of financing, agency roles and coordination in the UNDAFs.
- (2) Support governments to develop national targets that build on the WHO Global Action Plan, including the 9 voluntary global targets to be attained by 2025.
- (3) Assist governments in the development, implementation and monitoring of national multi-sectoral policies and plans to achieve their national targets, in line with the WHO Global Action Plan.

The UN General Assembly will conduct a comprehensive assessment of the progress achieved in the prevention and control of NCDs later in 2014. This will be an important opportunity to highlight progress at country level and demonstrate how the UN System is working together to support countries to respond to the health and development challenges posed by NCDs.

We count on your continued support and commitment.

Yours sincerely,



Helen Clark
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Margaret Chan
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² http://www.who.int/nmh/events/2013/E.2013.L.23_tobacco.pdf