

**THE ROAD TO 2011:  
HOW HEALTH DIPLOMACY AT THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY  
MOVED NCDs INCREASINGLY CENTER-STAGE**

1. In 2000, the World Health Assembly adopted the WHO Global Strategy on NCDs<sup>1</sup>, which linked four of the most prominent NCDs (cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic respiratory disease, and diabetes) to four preventable risk factors (tobacco use, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, and the harmful use of alcohol). In 2008, the World Health Assembly adopted the ‘WHO Global Action Plan 2008-2013 for the Implementation of the WHO Global Strategy on NCDs’<sup>2</sup>, which comprised “a set of action which, when performed collectively by Member States and other stakeholders, will tackle the growing public-health burden imposed by NCDs”<sup>3</sup>.
2. The WHO Global NCD Action Plan 2008-2013 took into account the (2003) WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control<sup>4</sup> and the (2004) WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health<sup>5</sup>. Following the endorsement of the Action Plan in 2008, the World Health Assembly also endorsed the (2010) WHO Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol<sup>6</sup>, and the (2010) Set of WHO Recommendations on the Marketing of Foods and Non-Alcoholic Beverages to Children<sup>7</sup>.
3. The developments since 2000 led a rapid increase in the demand for technical assistance from low- and middle-income countries to develop national NCD responses, which – unfortunately – “remained largely unanswered”<sup>8</sup>. It also led to an increasing global awareness that NCDs constitute one of the major challenges to development in the 21st century which the MDGs omitted to include.
4. In 2007, WHO supported CARICOM to convene the Caribbean Heads of State Summit on NCDs<sup>9</sup> (Port-of-Spain, 15 September 2017), which adopted the Port-of-Spain Declaration on NCDs<sup>10</sup>, committing Heads of State and Government to pursue a legislative agenda for NCDs and employ the revenue from health-harming products to implement national NCD responses.

---

<sup>1</sup> See A53/14 available at [http://apps.who.int/gb/archive/pdf\\_files/WHA53/ea14.pdf](http://apps.who.int/gb/archive/pdf_files/WHA53/ea14.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> See Annex of document A61/8 available at [http://apps.who.int/gb/archive/pdf\\_files/A61/A61\\_8-en.pdf](http://apps.who.int/gb/archive/pdf_files/A61/A61_8-en.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Paragraph 3 of A61/8 available at [http://apps.who.int/gb/archive/pdf\\_files/A61/A61\\_8-en.pdf](http://apps.who.int/gb/archive/pdf_files/A61/A61_8-en.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> See [http://apps.who.int/gb/archive/pdf\\_files/WHA56/ea56r1.pdf](http://apps.who.int/gb/archive/pdf_files/WHA56/ea56r1.pdf) and <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/42811/1/9241591013.pdf?ua=1>

<sup>5</sup> See A57/9 available at [http://apps.who.int/gb/archive/pdf\\_files/WHA57/A57\\_9-en.pdf](http://apps.who.int/gb/archive/pdf_files/WHA57/A57_9-en.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> [http://www.who.int/substance\\_abuse/activities/gsrhua/en/](http://www.who.int/substance_abuse/activities/gsrhua/en/)

<sup>7</sup> [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/44416/1/9789241500210\\_eng.pdf](http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/44416/1/9789241500210_eng.pdf)

<sup>8</sup> See page 2 of <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N10/531/44/PDF/N1053144.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>9</sup>

[http://archive.caricom.org/jsp/community\\_organs/health/chronic\\_non\\_communicable\\_diseases/summit\\_chronic\\_non\\_communicable\\_diseases\\_index.jsp](http://archive.caricom.org/jsp/community_organs/health/chronic_non_communicable_diseases/summit_chronic_non_communicable_diseases_index.jsp)

<sup>10</sup> [http://archive.caricom.org/jsp/pressreleases/pres212\\_07.jsp](http://archive.caricom.org/jsp/pressreleases/pres212_07.jsp)



First Summit of CARICOM Heads of Government on NCDs (Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago, 15 September 2007)

**“This is the first time in history that such an enlightened group of Heads of Government have collectively committed to stem the tide of chronic diseases in their countries, as these diseases seriously undermine economic growth and well-being across society and perpetuate chronic poverty at household level.”<sup>11</sup>**

*Catherine Le Galès-Camus, Assistant Director-General, NCDs and Mental Health, WHO*

5. In 2009, WHO supported the President of ECOSOC to convene the ECOSOC Regional Ministerial Conferences on Health Literacy<sup>12</sup>, and on NCDs and Injuries. The latter resulted in the Qatar Declaration on NCDs and Injuries<sup>13</sup>, and a Note Verbale from the Permanent Mission of Qatar to the UN to the President of ECOSOC<sup>14</sup> calling on ECOSOC to include NCDs in global discussions on development.



ECOSOC Preparatory Ministerial Meeting on NCDs in Western Asia (Doha, 10-11 May 2009)

**“In many countries, the impasse is that bilateral and multilateral donors are not responding to requests from low- and lower-middle income countries to support them in building sustainable institutional capacities to address NCDs, because these issues are beyond those targeted by the UN Millennium Development Goals”<sup>15</sup>**

*Ala Alwan, Assistant Director-General, NCDs and Mental Health, WHO*

5. The ECOSOC High-level Segment of the 2009 Annual Ministerial Review included a Ministerial Roundtable on NCDs. The resulting 2009 ECOSOC Ministerial Statement<sup>16</sup> recognized “that the emergence of NCDs is imposing a heavy burden on society, one with serious social and economic consequences”<sup>17</sup> and called for urgent action. At the 2009 High-level Segment of ECOSOC, the Russian Federation declared that it “attaches great importance to combatting NCDs” and that “it is essential to find immediate and

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.who.int/nmh/media/speeches/ADG%20Statement%20CARICOM.pdf?ua=1>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/newfunct/amr2009chinastatmnt.shtml>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/newfunct/amr2009qatarstat.shtml>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/newfunct/pdf/qatar%20-%20report%20of%20the%20western%20asia%20regional%20preparatory%20meeting%20-%20version%2025%20june%202009%20at%2010am.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.who.int/nmh/media/speeches/ADG%20Statement%20CARICOM.pdf?ua=1>

<sup>16</sup> <http://www.who.int/nmh/events/ecosoc/en/>

<sup>17</sup> Paragraph 18 of [http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/declarations/ministerial\\_declaration-2009.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/declarations/ministerial_declaration-2009.pdf)

adequate responses to this global threat”. The Russian Federation also announced that it “would be ready to organize in Russia in 2011 a special international conference on NCDs”<sup>18</sup>.

6. In January 2009, IDF invited the WHF and UICC to form the NCD Alliance. The three global federations came together in the recognition that this informal alliance had unique legitimacy as the global voice of civil society for NCDs. On 19 May 2009, over 150 leaders from ministries of health, civil society and the private sector met during the 62nd World Health Assembly in Geneva for the first joint NCD Alliance event – Health and Development: Held Back by NCDs – in which IDF called for a UN Summit on NCDs to raise the profile of NCDs on the global stage, mobilize the international community to take action, and send a clear message to decision makers<sup>19</sup>. The task ahead was daunting. Only once before had a UN High-level Meeting focused on a health issue with a special session on HIV convened in 2001. But achieving this landmark international meeting was seen as the first part of the battle in global discussions on development.



Health and Development: Held Back by NCDs (Geneva, 19 May 2009)

“We can no longer ignore the burden that cardiovascular disease, diabetes, cancer and chronic respiratory diseases is placing on countries that are least equipped to deal with them. We urgently call on the international community to ensure that the funding models applied to infectious diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria are expanded to stop the spiraling death rates from NCDs before the most vulnerable are pushed further into the poverty trap”<sup>20</sup>

*Pekka Puska, President of the World Heart Federation (2009),  
Former Director for NCD prevention and health promotion, WHO (2001-2003), and Director and  
Principal Investigator, North Karelia Project (1972-1979)*

7. In response, WHO launched NCDnet<sup>21</sup> on 8 July 2009<sup>22</sup> -- an informal collaborative arrangement with UN agencies, the World Bank and non-State actors to increase collective advocacy and build collaborative efforts and alliances for the prevention and control of NCDs. NCDnet held its first NCDnet Global Forum in February 2010<sup>23</sup>, which mobilized a broad base of stakeholders around priorities for advocacy and communications, financing national NCD responses, and monitoring and evaluation<sup>24</sup>. This resulted in the development of a strategic narrative which all stakeholders agreed to use to get NCDs included on the agenda of the UN General Assembly.

<sup>18</sup> See statement of Mr Valery Loschinin summarized in  
[http://www.who.int/nmh/publications/ecosoc\\_summary\\_en.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/nmh/publications/ecosoc_summary_en.pdf?ua=1)

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.eurekalert.org/news-releases/907689>

<sup>20</sup> <https://www.who.int/nmh/media/speeches/ADG%20Statement%20CARICOM.pdf?ua=1>

<sup>21</sup> <http://www.who.int/ncdnet/en/>

<sup>22</sup> [http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2009/noncommunicable\\_diseases\\_20090708/en/](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2009/noncommunicable_diseases_20090708/en/)

<sup>23</sup> [http://www.who.int/ncdnet/events/global\\_forum/en/](http://www.who.int/ncdnet/events/global_forum/en/)

<sup>24</sup> See report of the first Forum available at  
[http://www.who.int/ncdnet/events/global\\_forum\\_report\\_20100421.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/ncdnet/events/global_forum_report_20100421.pdf?ua=1)

**Strategic narrative developed in 2009 aimed at including NCDs on the agenda of the UN General Assembly:**

- In all developing countries, and by any metric, heart disease, strokes, cancers, diabetes and chronic lung diseases now account for a large enough share of premature deaths and poverty to merit a concerted and coordinated policy response. They are already dominating health care needs in most developing countries, as a result of globalization, rapid unplanned urbanization and population ageing. Tackling NCDs constitutes one of the major challenges for development in the 21st century.
- There is clear evidence that low-cost solutions exist to reduce the level of exposure of individuals and populations in developing countries to the common modifiable risk factors (mainly tobacco use, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity, and the harmful use of alcohol) to strengthen health care for people with NCDs, and map the emerging epidemic of NCDs, and that these are excellent economic investment.
- Public policy makers in developing countries are increasingly challenged to formulate effective strategies to address NCDs. But requests for technical support (through aid and expertise) from developing countries remain largely unanswered by international development agencies, mainly because these problems are not included in the framework of the MDGs.
- Discussions at the ECOSOC's 2009 High-level Segment in July 2009 and the Ministerial Consultations held in Beijing and Doha in April and May 2009, respectively, drew attention of the international community to the NCD gap in the global development agenda and proposed solutions to move forward

9. On 20 May 2010, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution submitted by the Russian Federation which “decided to convene a high-level meeting of the UN General Assembly in September 2011, with the participation of Heads of State and Government, on the prevention and control of NCDs”<sup>25</sup>. The scope, modalities, format and organization of the first High-level Meeting on NCDs were decided on 7 April 2011<sup>26</sup>.

10. To help Member States prepare for the first High-level Meeting, WHO organized six regional consultations of Member States<sup>27</sup>, hearings with non-State actors, as well as the first WHO Global Ministerial Conference on Healthy Lifestyles and NCD Control (Moscow, 28-29 April 2011)<sup>28</sup> that served to provide inputs to the preparations for, and discussions at, the first High-level Meeting. The Moscow

---

<sup>25</sup> See paragraph 1 of resolution A/RES/64/265 available at

[http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/64/265](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/64/265)

<sup>26</sup> [http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/65/238](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/65/238)

<sup>27</sup> 5 See <http://www.who.int/nmh/events/2010/en/> and <http://www.who.int/nmh/events/2011/en/> and paragraphs 9-18 of [http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf\\_files/WHA64/A64\\_21-en.pdf](http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA64/A64_21-en.pdf) and

<http://www.who.int/ncds/governance/first-un-meeting/en/>  
<sup>28</sup> [http://www.who.int/nmh/events/moscow\\_ncds\\_2011/en/](http://www.who.int/nmh/events/moscow_ncds_2011/en/)

Conference brought together more than 100 Ministers of Health from 162 countries<sup>29</sup> and resulted in the Moscow Declaration on NCDs<sup>30</sup> (which was endorsed by the World Health Assembly in May 2011).



First Global Ministerial Conference on Healthy Lifestyles and NCD Control (Moscow, 28-29 April 2011)

**“Through a multisectoral approach, the Russian Federation has increased life expectancy at birth by four years, Most of these gains are through control of NCDs, specifically a decline in premature cardiovascular mortality”<sup>31</sup>**

*Veronika Skvortsova, Deputy Minister of Health and Social Development, Russian Federation (2011)*

12. Immediately prior to the Moscow Conference, WHO’s NCDnet organized a second Global Forum to share views and experiences on how non-State actors could increase their contribution to the implementation of national NCD responses<sup>32</sup>. At the Moscow Conference, WHO released the first WHO Global Status Report on NCDs<sup>33</sup>, which presented an updated assessment of the current status of NCDs and provided a baseline to monitor how the world would respond to the growing NCD epidemic. The negotiations in the 2011 Political Declaration on NCDs started in May 2011 in New York were informed by the second report of the UN Secretary-General on NCDs<sup>34</sup> (which was prepared by WHO).

13. The first High-level Meeting of the UN General Assembly on NCDs took place from 19 to 20 September 2011 in New York<sup>35</sup> with the participation of 34 Presidents and Prime-Ministers, 3 Vice-Presidents, 51 Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Health, 11 Heads of UN Agencies, and more than 100 NGOs. The meeting adopted the 2011 UN Political Declaration on NCDs<sup>36</sup>, which included:

National commitments	Assignments given to WHO
<b>Governance</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Build national capacity to develop national multisectoral responses by 2013 and implement these responses through health-in-all-policies and whole-of-government approaches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop global targets and a monitoring framework</li> <li>Develop a global plan to provide guidance to Member States on how to implement the commitments made</li> <li>Provide technical assistance to developing countries</li> </ul>

<sup>29</sup> Report of the Conference is available at

[http://www.who.int/nmh/events/moscow\\_ncds\\_2011/conference\\_documents/en/](http://www.who.int/nmh/events/moscow_ncds_2011/conference_documents/en/)

[http://www.who.int/nmh/events/moscow\\_ncds\\_2011/conference\\_documents/conference\\_report.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/nmh/events/moscow_ncds_2011/conference_documents/conference_report.pdf?ua=1)

<sup>30</sup>

[http://www.who.int/nmh/events/moscow\\_ncds\\_2011/conference\\_documents/moscow\\_declaration\\_en.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/nmh/events/moscow_ncds_2011/conference_documents/moscow_declaration_en.pdf?ua=1)

<sup>31</sup> [https://www.who.int/nmh/events/moscow\\_ncds\\_2011/conference\\_documents/conference\\_report.pdf?ua=1](https://www.who.int/nmh/events/moscow_ncds_2011/conference_documents/conference_report.pdf?ua=1)

<sup>32</sup> [http://www.who.int/nmh/events/global\\_forum\\_ncd/en/](http://www.who.int/nmh/events/global_forum_ncd/en/)

<sup>33</sup> [http://www.who.int/chp/ncd\\_global\\_status\\_report/en/](http://www.who.int/chp/ncd_global_status_report/en/)

<sup>34</sup> See [http://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=A/66/83&Lang=E](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/66/83&Lang=E)

<sup>35</sup> [http://www.who.int/nmh/events/un\\_ncd\\_summit2011/en/](http://www.who.int/nmh/events/un_ncd_summit2011/en/)

<sup>36</sup> [http://www.who.int/nmh/events/un\\_ncd\\_summit2011/political\\_declaration\\_en.pdf?ua=1](http://www.who.int/nmh/events/un_ncd_summit2011/political_declaration_en.pdf?ua=1)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase domestic resources to implement national NCD responses</li> <li>• Integrate national NCD responses into health-planning processes and the national development agenda to raise the priority given to NCDs on national agendas</li> </ul> <p><b>Prevention</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accelerate implementation of the WHO FCTC, the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health, and the Global Strategy to Reduce the Harmful Use of Alcohol</li> </ul> <p><b>Management</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthen health systems that support primary care, prioritize early detection and treatment, and improve access to affordable essential medicines for NCDs</li> </ul> <p><b>Surveillance</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop national targets and indicators based on guidance provided by WHO and give greater priority to surveillance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify options for partnerships</li> <li>• Coordinate work with other UN Agencies</li> <li>• Measure results</li> <li>• Report progress to the General Assembly</li> </ul>
---	---

===