
Joint World Heart Federation and European Heart Network Statement on Agenda Item 5(e) – Health Systems Respond to NCDs

Honourable Chair, distinguished delegates,

The World Heart Federation and the European Heart Network commend Ministers and government representatives for the commitment they demonstrated in the Outcome Statement of the High-level Regional Meeting.

We further commend the EURO region for its commitment to adopt the Best Buys, and its significant progress in reducing the number of premature deaths from NCDs such as cardiovascular disease (CVD), the greatest reduction of any WHO region. We hope this outcome encourages governments to adopt a more ambitious goal, as discussed at the WHO European Meeting of National NCD Directors and Programme Managers in Moscow in June 2017.

Despite this highly commendable progress, Member States in the EURO region can still do more.

Tobacco use is the single greatest preventable cause of NCDs, and the EURO region has some of the highest smoking rates in the world. Alarming, adolescent tobacco use is actually increasing¹. Despite this, fewer than half of Member States in the region have raised taxes in line with the WHO Best Buys and FCTC recommendations².

At a population level, dietary risk factors are a major contributor to CVD, responsible for 56% of all the years lost to disability or death from CVD in the European Region.³

To sustain progress in tackling NCDs, we therefore offer the following recommendations to Member States:

- **Fully Implement the FCTC's recommendations:** Particularly we urge governments to introduce or increase taxes on tobacco products to ensure that these products are less affordable. Taxing tobacco products is a win-win for governments because such measures prevent the uptake of unhealthy products by young people, and raise government's revenues.
- A population based approach that aims to **reduce the whole population's exposure to dietary risk factors** offers great promise. Effective measures include food taxation or subsidies, regulatory controls on marketing of unhealthy foods, nutrient profiles, legal limits for trans fats, mandatory nutrition standards for schools, hospital and public places, aligning agriculture and food policies with public health objectives, and ensuring that trade and investment policies protect and promote public health.
- We call on governments to maintain their political commitment, and we urge **Heads of State, Ministers of Finance, Foreign Affairs, Development and Health** to attend the High-level Meeting on 27th September to commit to better health and improved economic development in their countries.

Thank you for your attention.

¹ <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/disease-prevention/tobacco/data-and-statistics>

² <http://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/disease-prevention/tobacco/data-and-statistics>

³ Global Burden of Disease database (2015)