

## World Health Assembly ‘omnibus resolution’ on NCDs: What’s it all about?

### Overview

At the 66th World Health Assembly (WHA) in May 2013, member states adopted an ‘omnibus resolution’ aimed at tackling non-communicable diseases (NCDs), co-sponsored by 41 countries<sup>1</sup>. The resolution marks an important step forward for the reduction of preventable deaths from NCDs globally and fulfils many of the commitments made in a United Nations (UN) Political Declaration on the Prevention and Control of NCDs in 2011.

The new ‘omnibus resolution’ brings together three key resolutions for the prevention of NCDs focused around **action** (Global Action Plan), **accountability** (Global Monitoring Framework) and **coordination** (Global Coordination Mechanism). IASO supports these moves and will be helping its members to engage with governments to achieve the targets for NCDs and obesity.

### Why NCDs?

*“World Health Organization data show that rates of obesity nearly doubled in every region of the world from 1980 to 2008. Worldwide, one in three adults has raised blood pressure. One in ten adults has diabetes. These are the diseases that tax health systems to the breaking point. These are the diseases that break the bank. These are the diseases that can cancel out the gains of modernization and development. These are the diseases that can set back poverty alleviation, pushing millions of people below the poverty line each year.”*

Margaret Chan, Director General, World Health Organization (WHO) May 2012

The major NCDs – cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes and chronic pulmonary disease – along with their major risk factors – obesity, diet, physical inactivity, alcohol and tobacco – now account for more than 36 million deaths (65%) every year, almost half of which (44%) are classified as preventable. Although once considered “diseases of the west”<sup>2</sup>, the majority of NCD related deaths (80%) now occur in low-and middle-income countries, where it has been predicted that by 2030 they will be responsible for nearly five times as many deaths as the combined figure for communicable diseases, maternal, perinatal and malnutrition related conditions<sup>3,4</sup>.

NCDs pose a significant health and economic burden to countries and therefore need to be tackled with urgency. The fact that they are preventable and caused by a range of underlying environmental and cultural factors, presents us with a real opportunity to reduce the global burden and save thousands of lives every year. Now is the time for action.

### UN Summit on NCDs 2011/WHA 2012/WHO

Following calls from member states, supported by lobbying from civil society actors, the UN held a High-Level summit in September 2011, focusing on the four major NCDs and their risk factors. This marked a

1 World Health Organization. *Sixty-sixth World Health Assembly*. 2013. URL: <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/events/2013/wha66/en/index.html>

2 Hu FB. *Globalization of Diabetes*. The role of diet, lifestyle, and genes. *Diabetes Care*. 2011, 34(6), 12449-1257. Available at URL: <http://care.diabetesjournals.org/content/34/6/1249.full>

3 World Economic Forum. *Global Risks Network 2010 Report*, Geneva, 2010

4 World Health Organization. *The global burden of disease: 2004 update*. Geneva, 2008

major global opportunity to put NCDs on the political map and initiate work to tackle these leading causes of preventable death and disability.

At this meeting the UN asked the World Health Organization (WHO) to develop a set of targets and guidance on achieving the targets. A Resolution to reduce premature mortality by 25% by 2025 was tabled and adopted at the 65<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly in May 2012, forming the basis of future work on NCDs by the WHO.

During this period, extensive consultations with member states and civil society took place, offering opportunity for a range of stakeholders to feed into the wording of the final documents. This allowed the proposals to evolve and develop.

### **The WHA ‘Omnibus Resolution’ on NCDs - 2013**

The omnibus resolution brings together three key resolutions for the prevention of NCDs focused around **targets and accountability** (Global Monitoring Framework), **action** (Global Action Plan), and **coordination** (Global Coordination Mechanism).

### **The WHO Global Monitoring Framework (GMF)**

The global monitoring framework is the key accountability arm of the omnibus resolution. The targets set aim to encourage member states to engage, provide benchmarks and indicators on which they can base their efforts, encourages data collection and importantly provides countries with a mechanism for which to monitor their progress and analyse the outcomes/impact of their chosen interventions.

Following on from the WHA adoption of a global target to reduce NCDs by 25% by 2025 in 2012, the WHO went through a consultation process to set a series of more specific targets and indicators for the leading risk factors for NCDs. In November 2012, 9 targets with 25 indicators were endorsed at the WHO’s Executive Board meeting in January 2013.

Amongst others (See figure1 at the end of this briefing), a target to “halt the rise in obesity by 2025 by 2025” was included, as well as a target to halt the rise in diabetes, reduce physical inactivity by 10% and to reduce raised blood pressure by 25%.

Country level progress towards these targets is likely to be reported in 2016, 2018 and 2021.

### **Global Action Plan (GAP)**

The global action plan provides a roadmap of actions, activities and policies that civil society, industry and governments can take to tackle NCDs and meet the targets set out in the monitoring framework and includes a number of key diet and nutrition interventions. The GAP includes recommendations on issues of engagement and partnership which were recognised in the UN political declaration on NCDs as essential for making meaningful progress.

*‘The adoption of the global action plan moves the process from the political to the practical realm’*  
- Dr Oleg Chestnov, WHO Assistant-Director General, May 2013

The action plan adopted as part of the omnibus resolution, GAP 2013-2020, replaces an earlier document, GAP 2008-2012<sup>5</sup>.

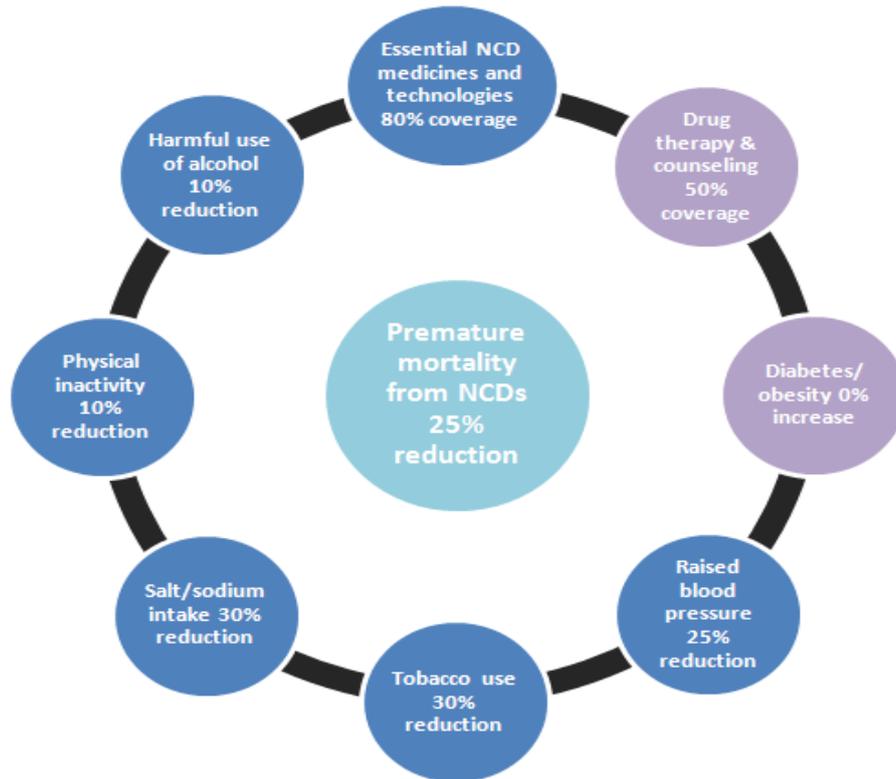
<sup>5</sup> World Health Organization. 2008-2013 Action plan for the global strategy for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases. Geneva, 2008. URL:<http://www.who.int/nmh/publications/9789241597418/en/>

**Global Coordination Mechanism**

The aim of the coordination mechanism will be to strengthen and coordinate global action on tackling the key drivers of NCDs. Through a series of consultations, the global coordination mechanism is expected to be agreed by the end of 2013. The coordination mechanism will aim to mobilise and help direct a range of actors, from civil society to industry to governments in implementing the GAP and meeting the targets.

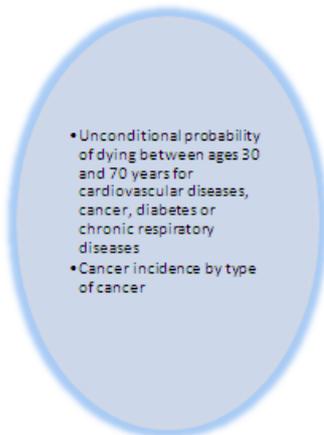
*Figure 1: The WHO Global Monitoring Framework – targets and indicators (adapted from WHO, 2012)<sup>6</sup>*

## 9 Voluntary NCD Targets



## 25 Indicators

**Mortality & Morbidity**



**Risk Factors**



**National Systems Response**



<sup>6</sup> World Health Organization. *NCD Global Monitoring Framework*. 2013. URL: [http://www.who.int/nmh/global\\_monitoring\\_framework/en/](http://www.who.int/nmh/global_monitoring_framework/en/)

## Looking forward

### What's next for the UN/WHA/WHO?

As part of the omnibus resolution, there were commitments made which require further action, including

- Developing a Coordination mechanism by the end of 2013 which will allow country level progress to be reported in 2016, 2018 and 2021
- To develop 'action plan' indicators which will link to the recommended actions from the Global Action Plan for the different stakeholders and partners. These indicators will go to the WHO Executive Board and World Health Assembly in 2014.
- The formalisation of the UN Task Force on NCDs

### What does the resolution mean for member states?

The resolution is only as important as the actions that member states take from it. We now have a framework of targets in which to act, and a series of potential interventions. Member states will need to implement national strategies in order to meet the targets by 2025. They will also need to develop a national monitoring system and strengthen surveillance based on the 25 indicators so as to monitor progress and be accountable for their actions.

### What does the resolution mean for IASO?

IASO welcomes the adoption of the NCD action plan, monitoring framework and commitment to introduce a global coordination mechanism. IASO, along with many other NGOs, was instrumental in securing this important step forward for NCD prevention. Globally, diet related risk factors account for 40% of NCDs and as such an emphasis on reducing the modifiable diet-related risk factors is welcome.

It is important to note however that in order to tackle some of the underlying causes of premature death, such as diabetes, cancer and heart disease, countries will need to implement a plan which not only "halts the rise in obesity" but reduces it. Strategies to reduce obesity will help member states to achieve the other targets set out in the resolution.

Now that the resolution has been adopted our next focus will be on ensuring that the appropriate steps are taken to implement policies in order to meet the targets laid out in the framework. Our work will include

- Publishing a briefing paper to support member states in responding to the targets and identifying further steps that can be taken
- Holding a conference on "tackling the root causes of obesity and NCDs" in New York (TBC)
- Supporting our members to help them engage with their governments and take the steps required to achieve the targets

### What does the resolution mean for IASO members?

Whether or not the resolution has a direct impact on your work, there are a number of ways in which you can take action and engage with the process. For instance, you could

- Write to your member states welcoming the resolution and urging action
- Emphasise and promote the importance of reducing obesity, not only for meeting the obesity target but in reaching related targets such as those for diabetes, high blood pressure and physical inactivity
- Let your members know about the resolution and encourage them to share, use and promote it.
- Refer to the resolution in funding applications to raise awareness of the resolution and to put your research in to context of global strategies to reduce obesity