

Speaking notes for Werner for the introduction of the UNIATF report and resolution

22 July 2021

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It is a pleasure to be here today.

You have the Note by the Secretary-General, transmitting the report of the Director-General of the World Health Organization on the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Disease.

The world's attention in the last 18 months has rightly been focused on the COVID-19 pandemic.

The report highlights that only 17 countries are on track to meet target 3.4 (by 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being).

The report also indicates that implementation has also been uneven for target 3.a (strengthen the implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control). Only 32 Member States are currently on track to achieve the voluntary WHO target of a 30 per cent relative reduction in the prevalence of tobacco use between 2010 and 2025.

The COVID-19 pandemic should remove all doubt as to why addressing non-communicable diseases is crucial for health and sustainable development. In different contexts worldwide, such diseases and their risk factors increase susceptibility to COVID-19 infection and the likelihood of severe outcomes, including in younger people.

COVID-19 is going to make it even more challenging to meet the NCD-related SDG targets.

In September 2020, WHO and UNDP issued a series of papers on the theme "Responding to non-communicable diseases during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic", with inputs from over 30 members of the Task Force, including:

- a policy brief describing why strong action on NCDs must be an integral part of the COVID-19 response and recovery and efforts to build back better, outlining steps that should be taken immediately and in the longer term; and
- examples of NCD-relevant actions being taken by agencies, funds and programmes to support countries in their response and recovery efforts.

ECOSOC has consistently highlighted the need for greater development financing for NCDs and mental health if the world is to meet the NCD-related SDGs.

And that is precisely why WHO, UNDP and UNICEF have joined forces to establish the United Nations first ever Trust Fund dedicated to supporting Member States tackle NCDs and mental health conditions.

The Fund is a catalytic fund. It is designed to catalyse action in low- and middle-income countries to strengthening their responses to NCDs such as heart conditions and strokes, diabetes and breast and cervical cancer and mental health conditions such as depression through:

- Fiscal, legislative and regulatory action;
- Strengthening health system responses as part of broader efforts towards universal health coverage;

- Increasing domestic financing; and
- Engaging with communities and affected populations.

Make no mistake, the Catalytic Trust Fund needs to be established during the COVID-19 pandemic because of the impact of the pandemic on NCDs and mental health conditions

The Catalytic Trust Fund aims to raise \$250 million dollars over 5 years. Based on global reports and the work that Task Force has done in country – through NCD and mental health investment cases, these funds will catalyze action that between now and 2030 will lead to:

- 8 million lives saved;
- 80 million healthy life years gained;
- US\$350 billion of economic benefits of some by 2030 for low- and middle-income countries; and
- Countries building back better in their responding to COVID-19.

Impressive returns!

WHO, UNDP and UNICEF are now looking for partners to shape the way that the Catalytic Trust Fund operates and is governed and is resourced to deliver.

Partnerships are crucial. In line with the numerous calls from the Council to foster and promote partnerships, the Task Force continues to advance its collaboration with UN partners, Member State and the private sector through the Access Initiative for Quitting Tobacco to enable large numbers of smokers, including front-line health workers and high-risk groups for COVID-19, to stop smoking.

The Task Force Secretariat remains ever grateful for the financial support from partners, which currently include the Russian Federation, the European Union, the Gulf Health Council and Italy.

Finally, let me conclude by thanking the Council for developing the resolution that we have in front of us today. It provides a clear and unambiguous way forward for the way that the Task Force needs to support Member States.

Thank you.