

19 September 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
at the South-South Awards 2011 Digital Health for Digital
Development**

Heads of State and Government, First Ladies, Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to extend my thanks to the Prime-Minister of Antigua and Barbuda, the Prime-Minister of Tajikistan, the Secretary-General of the International Telecommunication Union, and the Executive Secretary for the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa for the invitation to this meeting. I am very pleased to be here.

Over two days, Heads of State and Government are meeting here in New York to address the prevention and control of NCDs worldwide, with a particular focus on developmental challenges and social and economic impacts in developing countries.

During much of today, this High-level Meeting has heard how the poor face problems beyond those targeted by the MDGs, but which could seriously derail the MDGs.

We have heard how NCDs are slowing economic growth in developing countries, as a result of people dying during their most productive years.

And we have discovered how NCDs threaten to overwhelm health systems in developing countries.

Fortunately, we know how to prevent and treat most NCDs. Today's Meeting recognized that people will gain from primary health care services which are more responsive to early detection of cancers, diabetes and heart diseases. Likewise, people will gain from public sector policies which will reduce their level of exposure to tobacco use, unhealthy diets, physical inactivity and the harmful use of alcohol, which give them non-communicable diseases.

The Political Declaration on NCDs, which was adopted this morning by Heads of State and Government, will be a landmark in furthering the development agenda. But real success will only be achieved if development is sustainable, and if our economic structures are respectful of humanity and its environment. This Political Declaration on NCDs will hopefully help to make this possible.

Heads of State and Government, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This brings us to the theme for this year's South-South awards: Digital Health for Digital Development. Only five years ago, who would have imagined that today a woman in sub-Saharan Africa could use a

mobile phone to access health information on bringing her pregnancy safely to term? Or that today a young person in the Middle-East could use a mobile phone to help manage diabetes?

The World Health Organization conducted a global survey in 2009 on the use of mobile technologies for health, which found that there is a groundswell of activity: 83 per cent of Member States reported offering at least one type of health service using mobile telephones. Mobile phones are now the most widely used communication technology in the world. According to the ITU, there are now 5.3 billion mobile phone subscriptions in the world. They continue to spread at a very fast rate, especially in developing countries. This expansion provides unprecedented opportunities to apply mobile technology for health.

Especially relevant to tonight's ceremony is the Political Declaration on NCDs, which calls on Member States to promote the use of information and communication technologies to support the implementation of national policies and plans to halt NCDs.

Many developing countries are well aware of the need to promote the potential of information and communication technologies for health in general, and mobile technologies in particular. Many developing countries are already steaming ahead with digital health solutions that will serve as models for the entire world.

In my view, digital health for digital development represents a fresh and invigorating approach to global health, a new movement of rising power with increasing diplomatic as well as economic clout.

Heads of State and Government, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

2015 is the deadline for the MDGs. Increasingly, examples can be found where the thoughtful use of information and communication technologies has markedly addressed the health-related MDGs. Indeed, there is growing evidence that the use of these technologies can be a critical component of addressing some aspects of health. I fully believe that information and communication technologies can enable countries to meet the 2015 deadline.

Let me reiterate my commitment to help advance the MDG, NCD, and digital health agendas to achieve our common goals in the interest of global health and development.

I count on our continued collaboration as we advance our vital work at the General Assembly.

Thank you.