

20 September 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Closing Plenary of the High-level Meeting on the Prevention
and Control of Non-communicable Diseases**

Heads of State and Government, Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me express my sincere gratitude to you all for a highly productive meeting. It is clear from the last two days of intense discussions that the international community stands united in the global fight against non-communicable diseases.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the two distinguished co-facilitators, Her Excellency Ms. Sylvie Lucas, Permanent Representative of Luxembourg, and H.E. Mr. Raymond Wolfe, Permanent Representative of Jamaica. I would also like to express appreciation to the Secretary-General, H.E. Mr. Ban ki-Moon, for his leadership on this issue and for his Report on the Prevention and Control of NCDs, which was valuable in inspiring the Declaration. And I would like to thank the distinguished Co-Chairs of this meeting's roundtables; the Director-General of the World Health Organization, Ms. Margaret Chan; the Mayor of New York City, Mr. Michael Bloomberg; and all the distinguished participants for their contribution to this successful meeting.

Heads of State and Government, Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

By adopting the Political Declaration yesterday, you have affirmed with one, clear voice that non-communicable diseases will no longer be excluded from global discussions on development. There is now a mandate and a clear responsibility to address a challenge of epidemic proportions that curtails economic growth and widens social disparities. It will resonate for years to come and guide the efforts of the international community to address the risk factors and underlying determinants of health comprehensively and decisively.

Going forward, we will need to monitor the implementation of our commitments very closely. The General Assembly will, at its 67th session, consider options for strengthening and facilitating multi-sectoral action for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, through effective partnership. At the same time, the World Health Organization will be preparing recommendations for voluntary global targets by 2012, and has also been tasked with developing indicators and a monitoring framework before the end of next year. These next steps, as well as the progress report by the Secretary General and the review and assessment of implementation of the political declaration in 2014, will allow us to measure real-time progress in addressing these serious threats to health and development.

Your job, as political leaders, will be to promote and implement this new initiative. The world looks to you for a common effort to solve their problems.

Let me also recognize the important role of civil society as we move to implementation, as they will be key partners both in service delivery as well as awareness-raising.

Heads of State and Government, Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before closing today's meeting, I would like to offer an observation. It seems to me that the pendulum of public health has swung too far. Much focus has been on a few diseases, while denying attention and help to those who suffer and die from less dramatic-but no less fatal- diseases of the body and mind. While the four diseases discussed over the last two days are critical, they are by no means the only non-communicable diseases threatening livelihoods and undermining development on a considerable scale. In particular, mental health including depression is a major threat to the health and well-being of people worldwide. Going forward I would encourage you to broaden your definition of "non-communicable diseases", while remaining equally vigilant and targeted in your approach.

Heads of State and Government, Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Health and development issues are dear to my heart and I will remain committed to supporting you in your work, assisting as best I can in the implementation of your efforts in the 66th session of the General Assembly and beyond.

After two days of debate, I remain optimistic -- challenges abound, but with a carefully laid-out approach, we can lead the way in tackling the world's number one health threat and a leading risk to the global economy, and advance our social and economic development in the decades ahead.

Above all else, I am counting on you and your partnership. Together, we can save lives.

Thank you.