

29 June 2012

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser,
President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Opening of the second meeting of UN Funds, Programmes and
Agencies on the Implementation of the Political Declaration of the
HLM of the GA on the Prevention and Control of NCDs**

Delivered by Ambassador Anwarul K. Chowdhury, Senior Special Advisor to the President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly

Dr Oleg Chestnov, Assistant Director-General, Non Communicable Diseases and Mental Health, WHO
Dr Kumaresan, WHO representative to the UN,
Colleagues of the UN system,
Ladies and gentlemen,

As the Senior Special Advisor to the President of the General Assembly, I have the honor to deliver this message from the President, His Excellency Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser.

At the outset, let me acknowledge with appreciation the leadership role being played by the World Health Organisation (WHO) in effectively following up the implementation of the Political Declaration of the first-ever General Assembly High-level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs), which I had the honour of convening on 19 September 2011.

In my message for the first meeting of UN Funds, Programmes and Agencies last December convened by WHO here in New York soon after the High-Level Meeting, I had said that “the political declaration is a comprehensive document. It lays concrete foundations for forward movement. But the true value of our work lies in its effective implementation.”

In holding today’s second follow up meeting, the UN Funds, Programmes and Agencies, have shown their determination to live up to the task entrusted to them by the High Level Meeting to provide technical assistance and capacity-development in NCD prevention and control to developing countries, especially the Least Developed Countries (LDCs).

As I had said earlier, the political will expressed at the September Meeting on NCDs was a major breakthrough. Thanks to the engagement of Member States, the UN system, in particular WHO, and civil society, NCDs were given the well-deserved priority on the global development agenda. A mandate was established, and clear responsibilities were afforded.

The outcome of the High-Level Meeting reaffirmed a vision that goes beyond health and recognized the impact non-communicable diseases have on our development efforts and our economies in general.

As I did at your first meeting in December, the main thrust of my message to you here is to work together to ensure that the commitments made on 19 September become a reality.

On your part, concerted and coordinated action across the UN-system is central to ensuring that the UN is effective in delivering as one.

Your main responsibility, I believe, is two fold: first, to support at the country level development of national capacity for addressing NCDs, and to strengthen their national NCD policies and plans; second, to assist the Secretary-General in submitting options to the General Assembly for strengthening and facilitating multisectoral action for the prevention and control of NCDs through effective partnership.

In this context, I am pleased to note that the Director-General of WHO and the Administrator of UNDP addressed a joint letter to the UN Country Teams in March this year, proposing that NCDs be integrated into the UN Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) formulation and implementation. They asked that initial attention be paid to the countries where UNDAF roll outs are scheduled for 2012-2013.

I was also very pleased to learn that the World Health Assembly, decided last May to adopt a global target of 25% reduction in premature mortality from NCDs by the year 2025.

The just concluded Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development recognized the important linkages between health and development. In its outcome document, it acknowledges that the global burden and threat of NCDs constitute major sustainable development challenges for the 21st century.

A number of significant global trends are contributing to the rise of NCDs in the developing world. Let me mention three of these: population ageing, rapid unplanned urbanization, and the globalization of unhealthy lifestyles.

With these challenges confronting us, I am sure you will join me in expressing the sense of urgency that is needed to realize the commitments included in the political declaration on NCDs to reduce these increasingly widening gaps among countries.

Progress in protecting people from exposure to risk factors for NCDs, combined with early detection and screening interventions, have improved survival rates for many NCDs in industrialized countries. But survival rates in developing countries still remain very low. Also, most care provided to people suffering from NCDs in developing countries is covered through out-of-pocket payments, leading to catastrophic medical expenditures for individual, families and communities.

That is basically the reason behind the high priority that the political declaration on NCDs gives to improving access to prevention programmes, as well as treatment programmes in developing countries. It also recognizes the fact that prevention must be the cornerstone of the global response to NCDs.

Let me highlight three areas that should get our close attention as we engage in the implementation process of our decisions last September.

First, multi-sectoral action against NCDs involves national authorities engaging across government sectors to reduce the exposure of populations to the risk factors for NCDs. For us to achieve ready health gains we must work on influencing the public in sectors other than the health sector, and beyond making changes in health policy alone. It is important at today's gathering that you articulate how various UN entities can mobilize sectors like agriculture, communication, education, employment, environment, industry and trade, labour, transport and urban planning, towards a common agenda on NCDs. I look to you for the articulation of forward-looking contributions and commitments from UN Agencies in this regard.

Second, a more careful allocation and mobilization of resources will be essential for success. This includes supporting countries in exploring the opportunities for adequate, predictable and sustained resources, through domestic, bilateral, regional and multilateral channels, including traditional and innovative financing mechanisms. I look to you for new, creative ideas that are shaped by the critical challenges of our time.

Third, we need to build a strategic alliance of UN Agencies, Funds, and Programmes that can advance these ambitious goals on NCDs. This alliance is not needed at this time to shape the development architecture through broad mobilization and engagement of stakeholders from governments, civil society and the private sector. Again, I look to you for your valuable input for multi-sectoral action through effective partnerships.

Let today's meeting pave the way for strengthening the formidable instrument of commitment that we have in the political declaration of the High Level Meeting and ensure that momentum is maintained for its success.

With the commitments and collaboration of the UN system and the excellent work of the WHO, your deliberations and engagement today have the potential of saving millions of lives and millions more being assisted with prompt and appropriate care.

I wish you a purposeful and productive meeting.