

[‘Window of opportunity’ closing on non-communicable diseases, warns UN health agency](#)

18 September 2017 – Millions around the globe are dying prematurely from diseases such as cancer or heart disease, the United Nations health agency warned, urging governments to step up efforts to control non-communicable diseases (NCDs).

[“Limited national progress has been made in the fight against NCDs](#) – primarily cardiovascular and chronic respiratory diseases, cancers and diabetes – which are the world’s biggest killers,” noted the UN World Health Organization in a news release today.

According to estimates, 15 million people aged 30-70 succumb to these diseases annually. Furthermore, the latest edition of the WHO [Non-communicable Disease Progress Monitor](#) shows that progress around the world to control such conditions been uneven and insufficient, and over three-fourth of the deaths in low- and middle-income countries.

[“Bolder political action is needed](#) to address constraints in controlling NCDs, including the mobilization of domestic and external resources and safeguarding communities from interference by powerful economic operators,” said Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO Director-General, in his foreword to the Progress Monitor.

SEE ALSO: [More people warned against tobacco use, but industry interference continues, reports UN](#)

The findings also reveal that the world is not on track to meet one of the key health targets of the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) on reducing premature mortality from NCDs by a third by 2030.

Underscoring that “the window of opportunity is closing,” on being able to save increasing number of people, particularly children and adolescents, Douglas Bettcher, the Director the Department for Prevention of NCDs at WHO urged: “If we don’t take action now to protect people from NCDs, we will condemn today’s and tomorrow’s youth to lives of ill-health and reduced economic opportunities.”

The Progress Monitor provides data on 19 indicators in all of WHO’s 194 member States, such as setting time-bound targets to reduce NCD deaths, developing comprehensive policies to address NCDs; implement key measures to reduce tobacco demand; reduce harmful use of alcohol, and promote healthy diets and physical activity; as well as strengthen health systems through primary health care and universal health coverage.

Findings contained in this year’s edition will form the basis for a WHO study

later this year which will be released ahead of the third UN High-level Meeting on NCDs (to be held in 2018).

Iran implementing its nuclear commitments, UN atomic agency chief stresses

18 September 2017 – Iran is implementing its commitments under “the world’s most robust nuclear verification regime,” the United Nations atomic agency head said today, while at the same time voicing “grave concern” at the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea’s (DPRK) nuclear programme.

“The nuclear-related commitments undertaken by Iran under the JCPOA are being implemented,” UN International Atomic Energy Agency ([IAEA](#)) Director General Yukiya Amano told the opening of the Agency’s annual [General Conference](#) in Vienna.

Endorsed unanimously by the UN Security Council in 2015, the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), between its five permanent members (China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States), plus Germany, the European Union (EU) and Iran, set out rigorous [mechanisms for monitoring](#) limits on Iran’s nuclear programme, while paving the way for lifting UN sanctions against the country.

“Iran is now subject to the world’s most robust nuclear verification regime,” said Mr. Amano, who was [appointed by acclamation](#) today to another four-year term as Director General of the 169-member Agency.

Turning to the DPRK, he called upon it to comply fully with its obligations under all relevant Security Council and the IAEA resolutions.

“The nuclear test by the DPRK on September third, its sixth and largest to date, is [extremely regrettable](#),” he said. “The Agency is working to maintain its readiness to return to the DPRK when political developments make this possible.”

On 11 September, the Security Council unanimously imposed tighter sanctions on the DPRK, including limits on oil exports to it, banning its textile exports and its access to gas liquids, and more closely inspecting cargo ships going in and out of its ports.

The Council has passed eight resolution over the DPRK’s nuclear programme since it withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) in 2003, many involving increasingly severe sanctions.

Turning to other matters within the Agency's remit, Mr. Amano stressed its unique role in transferring nuclear technology to developing countries, and its work in supporting countries achieve the UN Sustainable Development Goals in energy, food and agriculture, industry, water management and health.

"The Agency will continue to deliver high-quality programmes and respond promptly to Member State needs," he said, noting that the modernization of the IAEA nuclear applications laboratories near Vienna was making excellent progress and the new Insect Pest Control Laboratory would be inaugurated in a week's time.

"When completed in a few years' time, the expanded laboratory complex will greatly increase our capabilities as a technology holder," he added.

[UN chief outlines three-part strategy to reshape global finance for sustainable development](#)

18 September 2017 – As the high-level week of the United Nations General Assembly gets underway, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today stressed the role of the UN to help reshape "unproductive and unrewarding" finance and redirect investment to creating a better world for all.

"The choices we make on finance will be critical," Mr. Guterres told [a special event](#) held at the UN Headquarters in New York on financing for global development goals.

Mr. Guterres noted that the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) – adopted by UN Member States in September 2015 – are a blueprint for building an inclusive, sustainable fair globalization.

"We can choose to bemoan the lack of financing for the 2030 Agenda in a world awash with so much unproductive and unrewarding finance. Or we can grasp the opportunity to reshape finance, according to our urgent, collective needs," he said. "The choice is clear. Let us invest in the 2030 Agenda and finance a better world for all."

However, today's global financial system, which manages some \$300 trillion in financial assets, is simply not fit for purpose, the UN chief said, recalling that the [Addis Ababa Action Agenda](#), adopted in 2015 at an international conference in the Ethiopian capital on financing for development, highlights the importance of being innovative in leveraging resources and financing for development.

The UN's three-part strategy for enhancing its support to financing the 2030 Agenda would help achieve short- and medium-term results, he said.



Secretary-General António Guterres speaks at the Financing the 2030 Agenda, "The Role of the United Nations". Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed (right) and Vice President Gabriela Michetti (left) of Argentina listen. UN Photo/Ariana Lindquist

The Secretary-General said that he will lead UN efforts to ensure that the objectives of the 2030 Agenda are fully reflected in international economic and financial policies by working closely with key inter-governmental platforms, such as the G20.

Second, he will reform the UN development system to strengthen its country teams, and third, he will champion key international initiatives that can harness large-scale changes in financing and financial system development, such as in the fields of digitalization and climate finance and in cooperating with major investment initiatives.

Also addressing the event was Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed, who [said](#) that trillions of dollars need to be mobilized a year by tapping into the savings of citizens around the world, official development assistance (ODA), domestic financing and the world's financial system.

The UN has always been engaged in this financing agenda, with its partners, allies and of course Member States, but "our question is whether we are doing enough, and the answer, in short, is no," she said, explaining that this event is timely as it highlights progress and opportunities from parts of the UN's leadership team, key partners such as the World Bank, private sector actors, and Member States.

[More than 128 countries back pledged reforms to shape '21st century UN'](#)

18 September 2017 – Pledging to overhaul the United Nations bureaucracy to make the world body stronger and more responsive to the people it serves, [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres today launched a pledge of support for reforms that has the backing of 128 countries.

"Our shared objective is a [21st century UN](#) focused more on people and less on process, more on delivery and less on bureaucracy," the Secretary-General said at the event co-hosted by United States President Donald Trump.

He added that "value for money while advancing shared values – this is our

common goal.”

Mr. Guterres said someone recently asked him what kept him awake at night – bureaucracy, was the simple answer. “Fragmented structures. Byzantine procedures. Endless red tape,” he added.

“To serve the people we support and the people who support us, we must be nimble and effective, flexible and efficient,” he stated.

The 10-point Declaration for support for UN reforms aims to simplify procedures and decentralize decisions, with greater transparency, efficiency and accountability, according to Mr. Guterres.

In recent months, the UN embarked on plans to achieve gender parity among the Organization’s middle and senior-management positions, and is working to reorganize the peace and security sections so they are refocused on prevention and mediation.

The UN has also prioritized ending sexual exploitation and abuse. At a high-level meeting scheduled for today, the UN is due to announce a ‘Circle of Leadership’ which will include Heads of State and Government committed to ending impunity and strengthening measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping and political mission, among other international deployments.

In his speech today, Mr. Guterres also noted reforms to the UN’s development system, to become more coordinated, focused on the people and more accountable to better assist countries along the 17 priorities in the [2030 Agenda](#) for Sustainable Development.

These aims, Mr. Guterres said, will be measured through “tangible results in the lives of the people we serve” and in “the trust of those who support our work through their hard-earned resources.”

The UN chief quoted President Trump who he said on multiple occasions noted that “the UN has tremendous potential.”

“All of us have a responsibility to make sure we live up to it,” Mr. Guterres said.

School meal funding crisis puts 1.5 million West, Central African children at risk, UN agency warns

18 September 2017 – As the 2017-2018 school year starts, more than 1.5

million children across West and Central Africa risk going to school hungry or dropping out altogether, due to lack of financing for nourishing school meals, the United Nations food relief agency said today.

By failing to fully fund school meals, we are collectively [short-changing the next generation](#) and Africa's future," said Abdou Dieng, West and Central Africa Regional Director of the World Food Programme (WFP) in a news release.

School meals are one of the best investments the international community can make to ensure a head start for young children in some of the world's poorest countries.

In many areas of the region, WFP is the sole or main provider of school meals. Over the years, however, WFP has shrunk its coverage for lack of funds.

In Burkina Faso, WFP's school meals programme for nearly 83,000 children is 0 per cent financed, while the programme in Senegal is only five per cent funded.

In conflict-torn Central African Republic, the programme for more than 200,000 youngsters is half funded, and in Niger, the programme for more than a quarter of a million pupils is 19 per cent financed.

Other particularly at-risk countries include Liberia, Mali and Mauritania, but the funding dearth stretches across the region.

Altogether, WFP's regional programme faces an \$76 million funding gap, the agency warned, as experts were meeting in Montreal, Canada, for an annual forum on child nutrition, co-sponsored and hosted by WFP's Centre of Excellence against Hunger.

The news release noted that repercussions are dramatic, since the hearty and nutritious WFP-provided lunches and snacks are the only meal many youngsters eat all day. More broadly, the funding crunch puts at risk a whole generation, with broader spill-over effects on national economies and development.

"This is a crisis for education, but also a crisis for nutrition and food security which are the fundamental pillars of development," said Mr. Dieng,

Studies show the meals help improve attendance and performance rates. They are also a key incentive for parents to send their children — particularly girls — to school and to keep them there.