

[New UN high-profile panel set to take on noncommunicable diseases, cause of seven in 10 deaths globally](#)

Bold, innovative solutions are now on the table to accelerate the prevention and control of deadly noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) – such as heart and lung disease, cancers and diabetes – as a new United Nations health agency high-level commission gets set to begin its work.

“NCDs are the world’s [leading avoidable killers](#), but the world is not doing enough to prevent and control them,” said Tabaré Vázquez, President of Uruguay and co-chair of the World Health Organization’s ([WHO](#)) Independent Global High-level Commission on NCDs.

“We have to ask ourselves if we want to condemn future generations from dying too young, and living lives of ill health and lost opportunity. The answer clearly is ‘no.’ But there is so much we can do to safeguard and care for people, from protecting everyone from tobacco, harmful use of alcohol, and unhealthy foods and sugary drinks, to giving people the health services they need to stop NCDs in their tracks,” he added.

The NCD Commission is also co-chaired by President Maithripala Sirisena of Sri Lanka; President Sauli Niinistö of Finland; Veronika Skvortsova, Minister of Healthcare of the Russian Federation; and Sania Nishtar, former Federal Minister of Pakistan.

Each year, seven in 10 deaths globally are from NCDs, mostly from tobacco and alcohol use, unhealthy diets and physical inactivity.

More than 15 million people between 30 and 70 years old die annually from NCDs. Low- and lower-middle income countries are increasingly affected – with half of premature deaths from NCDs occurring in those countries.

“For the first time in history, more people are dying of noncommunicable diseases, such as heart disease and diabetes, than infectious diseases. This loss of human life spares no one – rich or poor, young or old – and it imposes heavy economic costs on nations,” said Michael R. Bloomberg, WHO Global Ambassador for Noncommunicable Diseases and Commission member.

Many lives can be saved from NCDs through early diagnosis and improved access to quality and affordable treatment, as well as a whole-of-government approach to reduce the main risk factors.

“The more public support we can build for government policies that are proven to save lives – as this Commission will work to do – the more progress we’ll be able to make around the world,” Mr. Bloomberg added.

The Commission was established by WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom

Ghebreyesus and runs until October 2019. It will contribute actionable recommendations to the Third UN General Assembly High-level Meeting on NCDs scheduled for later this year.

“Everybody deserves the right to a healthy life,” Mr. Tedros stressed. “We can beat the drivers of the NCD epidemic, which are among the world’s main obstacles to health.”

Dr. Nishtar argued that while there have been improvements in some countries and regions, the overall rate of progress has been unacceptably slow, “resulting in too many people suffering and dying needlessly from NCDs, and leaving families, communities and governments to bear the human and economic costs.”

“This year, governments will be held to account on progress they have made in protecting their citizens from NCDs,” she underscored.