

STATEMENT BY MR. GHULAM NABI AZAD, MINISTER OF HEALTH OF FAMILY WELFARE, AT THE HIGH LEVEL MEETING OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF NON-COMMUNICABLE DISEASES ON SEPTEMBER 19, 2011

Mr. President,

At the outset, please allow me to congratulate you on your assumption of the Presidency of the 66th Session of the UN General Assembly.

I also thank you for convening this high level meeting on the extremely important and topical issue of Non-Communicable Diseases. These have emerged as the leading cause of disease, disability and death worldwide and are posing a mounting challenge to health care practitioners, administrators and policy makers world wide.

As far as India is concerned, we are faced with the triple burden of communicable diseases, new and re-emerging infections and the increasing incidence of non-communicable diseases.

More than half of all deaths are now attributed to Non-Communicable Diseases. However, we must recognize that conditions such as mental and neurological disorders also require special attention.

In fact, alarmed by the rising incidence of the non-communicable diseases and their impact on the health care delivery, a national summit was held in India subsequent to the Global Health Ministerial Conference on Healthy Lifestyles and Non-communicable Disease Control in Moscow in April 2011.

Besides the Delhi Call for Action from the national meet, we now also have 10 key messages from the recently held WHO South-East Asia Regional meeting at Jaipur in India.

As India's Minister for Health, I am privileged to be here and believe that such a massive global effort will be very useful in sensitizing the policy makers at the highest level to the need to allocate sufficient resources to combat NCDs.

Mr. President,

We are conscious of the fact that Non Communicable Diseases are not only a health issue but also a development issue as they impact productivity and also impoverish the society due to high health expenditures.

The Government of India has launched a "National Programme for Prevention & Control of Cancer, Diabetes, Cardio Vascular Diseases (CVDs) and Stroke (NPCDCS)" and the "National Programme for Health Care of Elderly (NPHCE)". This has been taken up for implementation as a pilot project covering 150 million population in 100 inaccessible and most backward districts during the current financial year (2011-2012) at a cost of USD 275 million.

The program includes:

- Establishment of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCD) clinics at 100 district hospitals and 700 Community Health Centers (CHCs) for diagnosis and management of Cardiovascular Diseases (CVD), Diabetes & Stroke and separate Cardiac Care Unit in each district hospital.
- Ensuring availability of life saving drugs through the provision of an additional USD 1,250 to each district hospital in 100 districts.
- Provision of common diagnostic services at these 100 district hospitals for early detection of cancer. Provision is also being made for basic surgery, chemotherapy and palliative care at these hospitals.
- Supporting chemotherapy through provision of drugs in these 100 district hospitals for 10,000 patients at the cost of USD 25 million.
- Strengthening 65 centres as Tertiary Cancer Centres (TCCs) to provide comprehensive cancer care services at a cost of USD 1.5 million each.

Mr. President,

As I speak here today, screening of diabetes and hypertension is being carried out in these 100 identified Districts in 21 States and urban slums of 33 cities with more than 1 million population, where all adult males above 30 years of age and pregnant women of all age groups are being screened.

Our target is to screen 150 million people by March 2012 under this pilot project. This would be the largest such exercise attempted anywhere in the world. I am happy to state that this programme will be rolled out in the entire country in April 2012.

This national programme will also add to the many steps India has taken for the prevention and control of NCDs. A major health systems reform is underway in mission mode to re-vitalize primary health care since 2005. This platform is being used to integrate communicable and non-communicable diseases response at the cutting edge level.

Our commitment to tobacco control remains firm. India was one of the initial countries to sign and ratify the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. We have passed a very comprehensive Tobacco Products control Act which bans:

- i) smoking in public places,
- ii) sale of tobacco products to those below 18 years of age or within 100 yards of an educational institution, and
- iii) direct or indirect advertisement of tobacco products

Mr. President,

India's technology innovations have led to affordable health care not only for our population but also for many other countries in the world. Prominent among these are re-combinant human insulin, poly-pill for prevention of cardio-vascular and stroke events, clot buster to enhance efficiency and a heart valve for rheumatic heart disease.

This august gathering will agree with me that it is difficult enough to be sick, but it is devastating to be poor and sick. We must therefore address the issue of trade barriers which restrict access to affordable and newly developed medicines. It is vital to ensure universal access to medicines, including through the full use of the flexibilities contained in the TRIPS Agreement and the Doha Declaration on TRIPS and Public Health.

This meeting provides us a historic opportunity in reaffirming our commitments, both financial and human resources, for combating the NCDs. We need to make concrete commitments on sharing global resources, technical expertise and best practices to build capacity to combat NCDs. In this regard, I would like to thank WHO in general and DG in particular for their continued support and assistance.

Mr. President,

In conclusion, let me reaffirm India's strong commitment to the outcome document and our firm resolve to prevent and combat NCDs by improving accessibility and affordability of health care in a concerted and more collaborative manner.

Thank you.

[BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)