

## **Summary of the high-level panel discussion on ‘Access to sustainable NCD treatment and care’ at the World Health Summit on 26 October 2020**

With a focus on tackling non-communicable diseases (NCDs), discussed against the backdrop of COVID-19, the high-level session, moderated by journalist Juliette Foster, featured 22 panellists and speakers representing governments, multilateral institutions, development banks, humanitarian organisations, academia, philanthropic foundations and private companies. With 469 participants, this panel discussion was the most well-attended of all sessions at the World Health Summit this year.

Dr. Bente Mikkelsen, Director of the Department of Non-Communicable Diseases in the division of Universal Health Coverage/Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases, at the World Health Organization (WHO) headquarters, set the scene, presenting how the rate of global progress to reduce the risk of premature deaths from NCDs was initially positive, but then slowed between 2010 and 2019. Today NCDs often make up the majority of deaths in low-resource countries. With the outbreak of COVID-19, NCD cases have increased in severity. Dr. Mikkelsen stressed that new international funding patterns, that have arisen as a result of COVID-19, should be used to correct historical underinvestment in NCDs.

Dr. Mikkelsen emphasised that more work is required to improve impact at country-level. She identified four areas where work is still needed: i) improving access to affordable NCD medicines, ii) innovating through digital health, iii) promoting self-care, and iv) building partnerships at country-level. These are areas covered in The Defeat NCD Partnership’s comprehensive operational strategy and which neatly complement WHO’s normative and standard setting work. Dr. Mikkelsen particularly commended The Defeat-NCD Partnership’s work across capacity building, digital health and community scale-up in Myanmar and Rwanda. In addition to WHO’s role in the governance mechanism of The Defeat-NCD Partnership, Dr. Mikkelsen presented that she looked forward to further strengthening the collaboration to accelerate country-level impact as the Partnership scales up to respond to the increased demand for its services from new programme countries.

Health ministers from Myanmar and Rwanda, the two priority programme countries supported by The Defeat-NCD Partnership in 2020, shared how NCDs are estimated to account for 68 percent and 44 percent of deaths in their respective countries (WHO, 2016). Both Dr. Myint Htwe, Myanmar’s Union Minister for Health and Sports, and Dr. Daniel Ngamije, Rwanda’s Minister of Health, provided details of their national strategies and costed action plans, outlining the interventions required to reduce premature mortality from NCDs, as part of global efforts to achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3.4: reducing premature deaths from NCDs by one-third by 2030.

Prime Minister of Saint Kitts and Nevis, Chair of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Council for Health and Social Development (COHSOD), and Chair of The Defeat-NCD Partnership’s High Level Council, Timothy Sylvester Harris, described a current window of opportunity and a duty to mitigate the risk of a catastrophic COVID-19 pandemic through enhanced prevention and control of NCDs. Prime Minister Harris presented how Saint Kitts

and Nevis, like other Caribbean states, was grappling with the deadly duo of COVID-19 and NCDs, and that both of these were connected to climate change, the overarching challenge of small island developing states.

Prime Minister Harris urged leading financial institutions, like the World Bank, Inter-American Bank and Caribbean Development Bank, to support the strengthening of health systems and called for investment in The Defeat-NCD Partnership's practical approach that would tackle NCDs and COVID-19 simultaneously. He appreciated the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States Secretariat and the European Commission for being among the first to recognise and support The Defeat-NCD Partnership since its launch at the United Nations General Assembly in New York on 24 September 2018.

Prime Minister Harris commended the practical country progress by The Defeat-NCD Partnership in Myanmar and Rwanda, and called upon the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States and the European Commission to further invest in the Partnership's scale up.

A similar message on the importance of such practical partnerships and an invitation for greater commitments to The Defeat-NCD Partnership was echoed by the Chairman of the Board of Managing Directors and Chief Executive Officer from Boehringer Ingelheim, Hubertus von Baumbach. Mr. von Baumbach spoke of how it is not just about providing the product, but attention must begin much earlier, in creating awareness, building supply chains, building public and private healthcare infrastructure, and expanding health insurance to improve access. Subsequent presentations and interventions also emphasised this need for a holistic approach at country-level to address NCDs.

Mukul Bhola, Chief Executive Officer, The Defeat-NCD Partnership, presented the NCD challenge and how the Partnership was set up as the practical response to the widespread call for action on NCDs. He shared how developing countries have emphasised they do not want pilot projects or ad hoc interventions, but a comprehensive and interconnected approach that will succeed in bringing about a transformation that is needed. He described the work of the Partnership since its launch and scaling up plans for 2021.

Presented here are some key outcomes from the session, organised under The Defeat-NCD Partnership's four interconnected pillars that, taken together, constitute a comprehensive service package to tackle the most common gaps and constraints that challenge low-resource countries.

#### 1. National NCD capacity building

Dr. Myint Htwe emphasised that if action is not taken now in Myanmar, a major chunk of the country's health budget will be consumed by NCDs in five to 10 years' time. He presented a costed operational plan for the prevention and control of NCDs during 2021 and 2022, requiring US\$ 101 million. Of this, Dr. Myint committed to find US\$ 76 million from domestic revenue and that Myanmar is seeking US\$ 25 million in catalytic international aid. Successful delivery of the plan will mean two million vulnerable people benefit from prevention and treatment of NCDs free of charge, and it will more widely impact 11 million people. Dr. Myint also detailed how this plan will reduce out-of-pocket expenditure for the most vulnerable from 82 percent to 63 percent.

Dr. Myint outlined four areas where Myanmar is seeking support for delivery of its costed plan: i) public-private partnerships to improve service delivery, ii) digital transformation of the health system, iii) national supply chain management improvements, and iv) pooled procurement for affordable NCD medicines.

Dr. Myint announced the Myanmar Defeat-NCD Fund, a pooled funding facility set up between the Government of Myanmar and The Defeat-NCD Partnership to improve resource allocation for priority areas, and to achieve strategic goals in the prevention and control of NCDs in Myanmar. He concluded his presentation by giving special appreciation to The Defeat-NCD Partnership for its technical assistance in making this plan a reality, and its support in securing funding towards the pooled funding facility from the World Diabetes Foundation, in addition to European Union and World Bank resources.

In Rwanda, around 90 percent of COVID-19 deaths to date have an NCD co-morbidity. NCD cases generally are on the rise in Rwanda, with the majority of NCDs being detected late, usually after the disease has shown complications. Dr. Daniel Ngamije described the need to reverse the NCD trend in Rwanda. Developed with technical assistance from The Defeat-NCD Partnership, Rwanda's five-year strategy, to run from 2020 to 2025, and accompanied by a costed action plan, aims to support 4.8 million people, and reduce premature mortalities from NCDs by 25 percent by 2025. Delivering the plan will cost US\$ 638 million and Dr. Ngamije called for continued support from The Defeat-NCD Partnership and others to help Rwanda in achieving its goals.

Dr. Juan Carlos Zevallos, Minister of Health, Ecuador; Dechen Wangmo, Minister of Health, Bhutan; and Dr. Ahmadou Lamin Samateh, Minister of Health, The Gambia, each presented the NCD challenges faced in their respective countries. The Defeat-NCD Partnership has been requested to support these countries in developing costed action plans and providing access to NCD drugs and diagnostics through the Partnership's marketplace in 2021. Similarly, The Defeat-NCD Partnership will also be scaling up programming to extend its services and assistance next year in Nepal, India and countries in the Caribbean region.

## 2. Community scale up of NCD services

The President of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), Francesco Rocca, described how prevention and care of NCDs starts in communities and is key to saving lives. He recognised The Defeat-NCD Partnership as a timely partnership, and committed the support of 13 million Red Cross Red Crescent volunteers, hundreds of thousands of whom are already playing an important role in tackling NCDs by increasing awareness of chronic diseases, bridging the gap between communities and health services, empowering people to take charge of their own health, and promoting locally appropriate solutions to health issues.

Innovation was a popular theme across the session. Dr. Gina Agiostratidou, Programme Director of The Leona M. and Harry B. Helmsley Charitable Trust's Type 1 Diabetes Programme, emphasised the accelerated pace of reform and attention to innovation and technology in health in 2020, as a result of COVID-19. She described how telehealth has been instrumental in providing NCD care this year, with telemedicine and digital platforms bringing specialist care to people in greatest need, wherever they live.

Dr. Svetlana Akselrod, Director of the Global NCD Platform at WHO, began by affirming how just over two years ago she had the privilege of representing WHO at the launch of The Defeat-NCD Partnership at the UN General Assembly. She applauded The Defeat-NCD Partnership on the great progress made in such a relatively short time period, particularly the country-level impact in Myanmar and Rwanda. Dr. Akselrod described how The Defeat-NCD Partnership is a great example of multisectoral and multi-stakeholder engagement and partnerships, which are the focus of the Global NCD Platform.

Dr. Akselrod described the need to engage young public health leaders and youth organisations to showcase innovative and creative thinking. She announced that WHO and

The Defeat-NCD Partnership are about to start a joint capacity-building programme for young researchers from low- and middle-income countries to develop skills and knowledge in order to find context-specific solutions for their respective countries.

Christoph Loch, Director of Cambridge Judge Business School at the University of Cambridge, illustrated how developing countries have the opportunity to learn, innovate and then leapfrog developed nations to achieve healthier populations. Mr. Loch stressed the importance of initiatives being led by government and a systemic approach of nutrition education, and lifestyles changes by diagnosis and tracking. The Defeat-NCD Partnership is collaborating with the University of Cambridge including through placement of University of Cambridge MBA students applying their knowledge and skills to tackle real-life challenges related to NCDs, as part of the Cambridge Judge Business School's Global Consulting Project.

### 3. Affordability and access of essential NCD supplies

Teva Pharmaceuticals, represented at the session by Amalia Adler-Waxman, Vice President, Global Head, Environment, Social and Governance, highlighted the importance of partnerships to increase access to the most needed medicines, for the most vulnerable in society. Addressing challenges related to a lack of access to NCD medicines is at the heart of their approach.

Using the COVID-19 vaccine as an example, Adar Poonawalla, Chief Executive Officer and the Executive Director of the Serum Institute of India, shared the challenge of volumes needed and urged other manufacturers to consider equity and a responsibility to make vaccines affordable and accessible. Mr. Poonawalla's description of the criticality of 'last mile delivery', to ensure that vaccines get to everybody that needs them, has very practical implications for NCD care, requiring a similar level of commitment.

Kiran Mazumdar-Shaw, Chairperson and Managing Director of Biocon, expressed Biocon's commitment to increasing the accessibility and affordability of insulin, alongside ensuring access to digital therapeutics and empowering people to effectively manage their disease through innovative financing.

Amira Elfadil Mohammed Elfadil, Commissioner for Social Affairs of the African Union Commission, expressed a strong commitment to partnering with The Defeat-NCD Partnership to advance SDG3.4. She described the need to build capacity in Africa to produce medicines, products and technologies to ensure accessibility and affordability. Ms. Elfadil referred to the establishment of the African Medicines Agency and the highest-level of political will in the African Union on a number of advocacy initiatives and policies related to NCDs. The Defeat-NCD Partnership is in the process of concluding a Memorandum of Understanding with the African Union Commission that will enable collaboration and promotion of NCD best practice across the continent and ensure a multisectoral approach to garner requisite continent-wide political and policy action.

### 4. Sustainable financing

Olga Sclovscaia, Regional Head of Europe and Central Asia, from the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA), presented how MIGA's guarantee programme and private-public partnerships structure has traditionally been seen in infrastructure projects for roads, ports or airports, but is now increasing in healthcare, for hospitals and clinics, and in management service agreements. She described how MIGA will provide contractual guarantees to manufacturers from the private sector for The Defeat-NCD Partnership's marketplace contracts, allowing access to affordable, quality NCD drugs, diagnostics and medical devices.

Srividya Jagannathan, Global Lead – Lifesciences, from the International Finance Corporation (IFC), communicated the IFC's engagement in leading innovative financing and its work with The Defeat-NCD Partnership on structured products and bonds, to ensure increased private capital flows to tackle NCDs.

Virginija Dambrauskaite, Policy Officer in the Health Team of the European Commission's Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development, appreciated the WHO and The Defeat-NCD Partnership's approach, and the European Commission's commitment to strengthening universal health coverage and its continued engagement with The Defeat-NCD Partnership to explore new and innovative avenues for public-private sector collaborations.

Sonalini Khetrupal, Social Sector Specialist, South Asia Regional Department, from the Asian Development Bank (ADB), shared that the health sector is a priority area for ADB, and how funding allocated for COVID-19 responses can in turn bolster or impact NCD care. Ms. Khetrupal expressed ADB's commitment to working with The Defeat-NCD Partnership to strengthen NCD service delivery.

Dr. Ammar Abdo Ahmed, Senior Global Health Specialist, from the Islamic Development Bank Group (IsDB), presented IsDB's particular focus to saving the lives of one million women from breast cancer and 3.7 million lives from cervical cancer over the next decade. Dr. Ahmed expressed the commitment of IsDB to join forces with The Defeat-NCD Partnership to strengthen NCD responses.

The rich session concluded with remarks by Mukul Bhola, summarising the commitments and support from the panellists and speakers. Mr. Bhola ended the session by reminding participants that the difference between the world achieving SDG3.4 or missing the target by 2030 is 15 million lives not lost to preventable and treatable NCDs.