

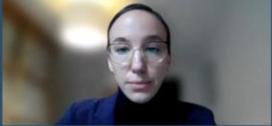
# Media Release

26 October 2021

## “Global Health Leaders Call for Redirection of Budgets to Build Resilient Health Systems with Strong Non-Communicable Diseases Service Delivery” - High-Level Panel Discussion on Addressing Non-Communicable Diseases During the COVID-19 Pandemic

### HIGH-LEVEL PANEL DISCUSSION

*Addressing Non-Communicable Diseases During the COVID-19 Pandemic*

 <p><b>Mukul Bhola</b> Chief Executive Officer, The Defeat-NCD Partnership, United Nations Institute for Training and Research</p>	 <p><b>Chrissy Bishop</b> Associate, Health Policy and Clinical Evidence Team, The Economist Intelligence Unit</p>	 <p><b>Henrik Finnern</b> Global Head, More Health - Sustainable Development, Boehringer Ingelheim</p>
 <p><b>Juliette Foster</b> Moderator</p>	 <p><b>Debra Houry</b> Principal Deputy Director, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, United States of America</p>	 <p><b>Bente Mikkelsen</b> Director, Non-Communicable Diseases in the Division of UHC/Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases, World Health Organization</p>
 <p><b>Ren Minghui</b> Assistant Director General, Universal Health Coverage/Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases, World Health Organization</p>	 <p><b>Mohammad Mirzaei Kahagh</b> Senior Partnership Specialist, Islamic Development Bank</p>	 <p><b>Praveen Pardeshi</b> Member (Administration), Capacity Building Commission, Government of India</p>
 <p><b>Ahmadou Lamin Samateh</b> Minister of Health, Government of The Gambia</p>	 <p><b>Makiko Toyoda</b> Head, Global Trade Finance Programme, International Finance Corporation, World Bank Group</p>	





Berlin, Germany, 26 October 2021 –

The 2021 World Health Summit (WHS), one of the world’s most important strategic forums for global health, comes to a closure today.

On 25 October 2021, the second day of WHS, the Defeat-NCD Partnership at the United Nations Institute for Training and Research organised a high-level panel discussion on

“Addressing Non-Communicable Diseases During the COVID-19 Pandemic”. The event brought together stakeholders from governments, multilateral development banks, the World Health Organization, the United Nations, and the private sector with a strong call-to-action on the way forward in prioritising non-communicable disease (NCD) care to strengthen epidemic resilience and preparedness through global cooperation. Panellists and speakers highlighted the intersection of COVID-19 and NCDs and reflected on practical solutions and the role of partnerships to leverage COVID-19 response efforts to support better health outcomes for NCDs. The event also highlighted and showcased practical examples of several developing countries’ leadership including the Gambia and Rwanda and their clear commitments to ensure better access to NCD care.

Makiko Toyoda, Head of Global Trade Finance Programme at the International Finance Corporation (IFC), shared IFC’s model and role in supporting trade and financing development in low-income countries. She also elaborated on the innovation trade financing pilot in support of the Defeat-NCD Partnership’s Marketplace, which will ensure access to fairly priced medicines, diagnostics, and supplies for low- and middle-income countries (LMICs).

Mohammad Mirzaei Kahagh, Senior Cooperation Specialist at the Islamic Development Bank, further shared the Bank’s commitment towards joining the governance mechanism of the Defeat-NCD Partnership, implementing the joint action plan to scale-up NCD services in member states and beyond, and financing cancer care programmes in collaboration with the Defeat-NCD Partnership.

“The way forward is through strong partnerships. It is by joining our collective knowledge, skills, and resources that we will be able to build healthy, productive, and resilient communities”, said Mukul Bhola, Chief Executive Officer of the Defeat-NCD Partnership at the United Nations Institute for Training and Research.

Henrik Finner, Boehringer Ingelheim’s Global Head of More Health – Sustainable Development, set the tone of the event by emphasising on how the current deadly challenge that NCDs represent has worsened in the context of COVID-19, and on the urgency of building future resilience from lessons learnt from the pandemic. “We must take forward important lessons from the pandemic and incorporate them into the way that we tackle NCDs.”

This statement was supported by Praveen Pardeshi, Member of the Capacity Building Commission of the Government of India, who presented the results of the study produced by the Defeat-NCD Partnership and the Economist Intelligence Unit, that shows a clear correlation between COVID-19 case fatality rates and NCD mortality rates. “The amount spent globally on COVID-19 response in one year is 4.5 times what is required to achieve all Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 goal targets and indicators by 2030”, he said. The eye-opening figures served as a wakeup call on re-evaluating global health spending priorities, especially in order to be able to achieve SDG 3.

Indeed, Dr Ren Minghui, Assistant Director-General for Universal Health Coverage/ Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases at the World Health Organization, presented further data highlighting the timeliness of the NCD challenge. “Only 35 countries have implemented 10 of the commitments made for prevention and control of NCDs made at the United Nations General Assembly. Only 14 are on track for achieving SDG 3.4 for 2030. No countries are on track to achieving all nine targets agreed in 2013 for 2025”, said Dr Minghui.

Also speaking on the high-level panel, Dr Ahmadou Lamin Samateh, Minister of Health of the Gambia, provided a concrete example of political commitment to ensure better access to NCD care, as the country recently developed a new five-year national NCD strategy and costed action plan. "Our biggest and more ambitious response to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on NCDs and vice versa was the development of the first ever national multi-sectoral strategy and costed action plan for NCD prevention and control in the Gambia through the technical assistance of the Defeat-NCD Partnership."

The urgency to build the resiliency of global health systems through better NCD services was further emphasised by Dr Debra Houry, Principal Deputy Director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention in the United States of America. "What we are seeing during the COVID-19 pandemic should not be a surprise. NCDs make nations less resilient when outbreaks occur. It has never been more important to address NCDs at a global scale."

Aligning with Dr Debra Houry and elaborating on the research study presented by Praveen Pardeshi, Dr Chrissy Bishop, Associate in the Health Policy and Clinical Evidence Team at the Economist Intelligence Unit, presented the ways we need to build and strengthen the quality of analysis on COVID-19 and NCDs to develop a comprehensive understanding of the link between the two health challenges. "A deep dive into the current healthcare financing landscape in LMICs and policy recommendations on how to improve access to UHC is needed."

Dr Bente Mikkelsen, Director of the Non-Communicable Diseases in the division of UHC/Communicable and Non-Communicable Diseases at the World Health Organization, reflected on how COVID-19 has engineered change in global health systems, through shifts towards digital tools, and how this can be used to support stronger NCD services. "We need to control NCDs as we are building back better."

The time to act and tip the scales in our favour is now. "The tools are there. WHO is playing a critical role setting the standards and formulating guidance on the most effective and efficient ways to address NCDs. The private sector is investing more and more in research and development in support of low-resource countries and improving access to quality supplies and care. Resources do exist as the research of the Defeat-NCD Partnership and the Economist Intelligence Unit highlighted. Developing countries like the Gambia and Rwanda are taking the lead and setting an example for other countries with their commitment and advancements in tackling NCDs in an effective, health system wide, and multi-sectoral approach", said Mukul Bhola in his closing remarks.

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The Defeat-NCD Partnership is a practical response to the widespread call for action on NCDs. Formally launched alongside the UN General Assembly in 2018, we are a ‘public-private-people’ partnership anchored in the United Nations but extending well beyond to include governments, multilateral agencies, civil society, academia, philanthropies, and the private sector.

Our vision is clear — universal health coverage for NCDs. To achieve this, our core mission focuses on assisting approximately 90 low-resource countries via comprehensive action across four interconnected service pillars: national NCD capacity building, community scale-up of NCD services, affordability and accessibility of essential NCD supplies, and sustainable NCD financing.

Fifteen million people die prematurely every year from non-communicable diseases like cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, diabetes and cancer. In 2016, non-communicable diseases were responsible for 41 million of the world’s 57 million deaths (71%). The burden is greatest within low- and middle-income countries, where 78% of all non-communicable disease deaths, and 85% of premature deaths, occurred. ([www.defeat-ncd.org](http://www.defeat-ncd.org))

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