



Address by

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**WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

to the

**THIRD ANNUAL REGIONAL MEETING TO SCALE UP THE IMPLEMENTATION  
OF THE UNITED NATIONS POLITICAL DECLARATION ON PREVENTION AND  
CONTROL OF NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASES**

**Cairo, Egypt, 27–29 April 2015**

Distinguished Guests, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to this third annual regional meeting to scale up the implementation of the United Nations political declaration on the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases.

This year, our annual meeting is somewhat unique. Joining us, for the first time, are the national managers and focal points for all NCD prevention programmes. We have all come together to scale up the implementation of the commitments made in the political declaration and in the regional framework for action. This meeting presents an important opportunity to review the challenges to implementation, particularly in light of the limited time remaining before the next global comprehensive review of progress planned to take place in 2018.

Since we last met in April 2014, there have been important developments in relation to the commitments made by Member States in the political declaration. Allow me to provide you with an overview of the most important developments so far, and of the implications for our Region.

In July 2014, the United Nations General Assembly completed a comprehensive review of the progress made in implementing the political declaration since 2011. It was acknowledged that progress has been insufficient and uneven, and that there is a need to move from commitment to action. To this effect, leaders and ministers renewed their commitment to the political declaration and, also committed to implementing the four time-bound measures laid out in the outcome document. That is:

- By 2015, Member States are to set national targets, and develop/strengthen national multisectoral action plans.
- By 2016, Member States are to reduce risk factors, and strengthen health systems.

During that same meeting, our region led, and played an important role in, advocating for inclusion of an accountability framework in the outcome document. The purpose of the framework was to measure progress by the next review period in 2018. Regretfully, this did not materialize. However, at the Sixty-first Session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean, the issue of an accountability framework was raised, and a related resolution was endorsed by Member States. The resolution was taken to the WHO Executive Board in January 2015. A consensus was reached by which the Executive Board requested the Director-General to publish a technical note on how WHO will report progress made by countries in realizing the commitments included in the political declaration and 2014 outcome document. This technical note contains a set of progress indicators that will assist Member States in better monitoring and reporting on progress. The Regional Office secretariat has contributed substantially to the preparation of this technical note in order to ensure that the progress indicators are aligned with the indicators of the regional framework for action.

Over the past year, many Member States have accelerated action on the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases, guided by the regional framework for action. This was first endorsed by the Regional Committee in 2012 and has been updated annually since.

In parallel, we are working on legislation specific to noncommunicable diseases, in order to support the implementation of the proven cost-effective interventions, known as ‘best-buys’.

The Regional Committee has also endorsed a new initiative to protect public health and promote healthy lifestyles, with a special focus on countering the largely unopposed commercial practices that promote unhealthy products, particularly those targeting children. These population-based preventive interventions remain at the core of the response to noncommunicable diseases.

As emphasized repeatedly by many Member States during the latest session of the Executive Board, the progress made between 2011 and 2014 was insufficient and uneven. Let us not see history repeat itself in 2018. Member States of our region have played an exemplary role in advocating for more stringent accountability mechanisms in measuring progress, and they now need to live up to the momentum that they have created.

I would like to use this meeting as a platform to work with you, to identify the main challenges impeding your progress in implementing the political declaration on the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases. We will work together during this meeting, and beyond, to identify optimal solutions that can facilitate your progress in meeting the time-bound commitments for 2015 and 2016. This will pave the way for the achievement of the desired political will. After this meeting, we will call upon your esteemed ministers to commit to the solutions identified in order to meet these commitments.

In conclusion, I urge you once again to make use of this meeting as a timely and necessary tool. Please be assured that WHO is always ready to support all Member States in translating those commitments into actions.

I wish you all a successful meeting and fruitful outcomes.

Thank you.