

NEWS RELEASE**WORLD HEART FEDERATION STRONGLY SUPPORTS
WHO REPORT PUBLISHED TODAY ON PREVENTING CHRONIC DISEASES**

4th October 2005, Geneva, Switzerland – The WHO today launched a new report, *Preventing Chronic Diseases: A Vital Investment*, demonstrating the full extent of the global burden of chronic diseases which include cardiovascular disease, cancer, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes.

The World Heart Federation, an NGO dedicated to the global prevention of heart disease and stroke, believes that the new findings show a realistic picture of the scale and severity of the problem and should be a wake-up call for Governments, health authorities and the medical community. The Federation and its member societies across the world strongly support the WHO's call for increased and urgent action for the prevention and control of chronic diseases and the new goal set by the WHO to reduce the worldwide death rate of chronic disease by two per cent per year over the next ten years, to save as many as 36 million premature deaths by 2015.

“Countries such as China, India and the Russian Federation could forego between 200 and 550 billion dollars in national income over the next ten years as a result of premature deaths caused by heart disease, stroke and diabetes alone,” said Janet Voûte, CEO, World Heart Federation¹. “Investment in intervention programmes to prevent and control the burden of chronic diseases is therefore essential for countries struggling to reduce poverty. The good news is that every country, regardless of the level of its resources, has the potential to make significant improvements. The WHO, through this report defines simple, effective and low cost measures and offers a flexible and practical framework to assist ministries of health in balancing diverse needs and priorities, while implementing evidence-based interventions,” said Janet Voûte.

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¹ Preventing Chronic Diseases, A Vital Investment, World Health Organization, 2005

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Olusegun Obasanjo, President of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, also supports the goal to reduce chronic disease deaths. “Governments have a responsibility to support their citizens in their pursuit of a healthy, long life. It is not enough to say, we have told them not to smoke, we have told them to eat fruit and vegetables, we have told them to take regular exercise. We must create communities, schools and workplaces and markets that make these healthy choices possible. We must tackle this problem step by step and we must start now,” said President Obasanjo.

“While chronic diseases are the world’s leading cause of death, they still feature very modestly, if at all, in the international discussion on development and are not actively included in the health objectives of the United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals,” said Janet Voûte. “We believe that this report will be a powerful advocacy tool to gain recognition and stimulate vital funding from development aid agencies, government donors, the World Bank and Regional Development banks, and from major international health foundations. The level of funding must be exponentially increased for countries to be able to systematically address this growing epidemic. In addition to development aid, it is also imperative that the health focus of the United Nation’s Millennium Development Goals is expanded to include chronic disease, in addition to its current focus on HIV/AIDS, Malaria and TB.”

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The report, *Preventing Chronic Diseases: A Vital Investment*, is available in PDF format at: www.who.int

Note to Editors

The World Heart Federation

The World Heart Federation, a non governmental organization based in Geneva, Switzerland, is committed to helping the global population achieve a longer and better life through prevention and control of heart disease and stroke, with a particular focus on low and middle-income countries. It is comprised of 186 member societies of cardiology and heart foundations from over 100 countries covering the regions of Asia-Pacific, Europe, the Americas and Africa. For further information visit: www.worldheart.org

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