

WHF Statement on Agenda Item 8.6 – SDGs and progress towards UHC

(i) Strengthening primary health care and health workforce

Honourable chair, distinguished delegates,

The World Heart Federation welcomes the Committee's report, and its focus on the urgent need to strengthen primary health care and the health workforce to achieve universal health coverage.

As the report notes, the burden of non-communicable diseases (or NCDs), is placing new demands on health systems in SEARO Member States.

NCDs are the leading cause of death in the region, accounting for 8.5 million lives lost each year.¹ Of these deaths, cardiovascular diseases (or CVDs) are the biggest killers, most commonly through ischaemic heart disease, stroke and hypertension.²

Without addressing this epidemic, SEARO Member States will not achieve Goal 3 of the SDGs. However, recent global partnerships present timely opportunities to both tackle CVD and strengthen the health workforce.

For example last year, the World Heart Federation, alongside WHO and other partners, launched the Global HEARTS initiative, a technical package for CVD management in primary health care being implemented in 8 countries.³

This partnership represents an unprecedented alignment among stakeholders in global CVD management, and we stand ready to offer policy, technical and implementation support to SEARO Member States.

To complement ongoing progress to tackle CVD & NCDs in the region, we make 3 recommendations:

1. **Implement affordable and cost-effective interventions to address NCDs at the primary health care level**, as outlined in the WHO Global HEARTS Technical Package and the WHO PEN Package.⁴
2. **Continue to support task-sharing and task shifting**, through training non-specialist healthcare professionals and volunteers to diagnose and treat NCDs.
3. **Increase funding dedicated to implementation research** to obtain better data on the effectiveness of innovative service delivery models for primary care.

And finally, **we call on Member States to attend the WHO Global Conference on NCDs hosted by the President of Uruguay in October**. This meeting represents a unique opportunity to strengthen policy coherence on NCDs ahead of the UN High-level Meeting next year.

Thank you for your attention.

¹ http://www.searo.who.int/mediacentre/events/governance/rc/sea-rc69-03_6.1.pdf?ua=1

² http://www.searo.who.int/topics/cardiovascular_diseases/en/

³ <http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/252661/1/9789241511377-eng.pdf?ua=1>

⁴ http://www.who.int/nmh/publications/essential_ncd_interventions_lr_settings.pdf