

144th Session of the WHO Executive Board, 24 January – February 1st, 2019 Geneva

Agenda 5.5: Universal health coverage: Preparation for the high-level meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on universal health coverage

Response to WHO Report EB144/14: http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/EB144/B144_14-en.pdf

Thank you for the opportunity to deliver this statement by the World Heart Federation, supported by 6 organisations who are members of the Global Coalition for Circulatory health and the NCD Alliance.

At the 70th World Health Assembly in May, 2017, you all endorsed the updated set of “best buys” for the prevention and control of NCDs which encompasses heart disease, stroke, kidney disease, diabetes, hypertension and peripheral vascular disease. As you well know, the best buys, when implemented, can support countries to reach Sustainable Development Goal target 3.4 of reducing premature deaths from NCDs by one-third by 2030.

You may ask yourself the question, why is this relevant to UHC? By implementing these measures, you will protect health, make populations stronger and more productive, save on health-care costs, and—if you implement **taxes** on tobacco, sugary drinks, and alcohol—you could generate revenues that can be ploughed back into universal health coverage. The World Bank Group, which is committed to helping government achieve UHC by 2030, **also identified fiscal policies**, particularly on tobacco, as a win-win policy measure that achieves both public health goals and raises domestic resources by expanding fiscal space for priority investments and programs that benefit the entire population.

We call on you, Ministries of Health, to engage more systematically with you colleagues in the Ministries of Finance to implement fiscal policies to achieve UHC. As civil society representatives, we pledge to do more to support you, our good friends in the Ministries of Health, to make the case for fiscal policies and to help you to demonstrate that health expenditure on NCDs is **an investment**, not a cost.

Thank you.

