

STATEMENT

UN Multi-stakeholder Hearing on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) and the Promotion of Mental Health and Well-being

2 MAY 2025, NEW YORK - IFPMA welcomes the upcoming 4th High-level Meeting on NCDs and Mental Health in September. The UN and WHO must continue to ensure political commitment to tackle the growing burden of NCDs impacting individuals, health systems, and all parts of society.

In 2011 at the 1st HLM on NCDs, political leaders recognized the heavy health and economic burden of these diseases, estimating 36 million annual deaths, of which nine million were premature and 80% were in low- and middle-income countries.

Today we face an increasingly constrained global environment and our ability to tackle public health challenges is being put even more to the test. The prevalence of NCDs has increased and is estimated to affect between one third and half of the world's population. The number of deaths due to NCDs is also going up, not down.

It is estimated that about one billion people are obese, contributing to increased diabetes, hypertension, and heart disease. Furthermore, one billion people have poor mental health. COPD remains a major, often overlooked NCD and is the fourth leading cause of death, and the ~800m people with chronic kidney disease means it will become the fifth leading cause of life years lost by 2040.

However, some important improvements toward tackling NCDs have been made. The innovative pharmaceutical industry has been at the forefront of incredible scientific innovation that is transforming our ability to prevent, treat, and manage many NCDs. In the last decade, over 1,400 NCD medicines were launched around the world with the potential to help millions of people, including first approvals for obesity, Alzheimer's Disease, and a digital therapy for depression. Generics and biosimilars save countless lives and support healthcare systems worldwide. Almost 40% of the medicines on the WHO's Essential Medicines List address NCDs.

But we are still falling far short of the mark. Only 19 countries are on track to achieve SDG target 3.4 of reducing premature mortality from NCDs by one-third by 2030. The WHO estimates, that by around 2050, chronic diseases will account for 86% of the 90 million deaths each year: a staggering 90% increase in absolute numbers since 2019.

There is broad consensus on what needs to be done. We have investment cases, Best Buys, targets and metrics, and compelling evidence on primary and secondary prevention to support action on NCDs and mental health. But we lack comprehensive and sustained action delivered through healthcare systems worldwide.

We call on governments to commit to disease screening, and leverage new diagnostic tools to identify diseases early, allowing for prevention and timely treatment that reduces hospitalization, care costs, and improves outcomes. We also call on governments to recognize the importance of a life-course approach to vaccination, which is essential for reducing the global NCD burden, including both vaccines for HPV and HBV that directly help prevent cancer, and those that prevent complications for people living with NCDs like COPD, asthma, diabetes, cardiovascular diseases, and dementia.

The pharmaceutical industry is committed to playing its part in getting its medicines and vaccines to patients who need them all around the world and developing new ones where there is still unmet need. With over 9,600 NCDs medicines in the pipeline, including almost 5,000 for cancer and over 2,800 for mental health, there is reason to be optimistic.

We will continue working with all stakeholders to expand access to prevention, treatment, and care, support capacity building and health literacy, foster patient empowerment, and strengthen health systems preparedness for the management of all NCDs.

In our recent call to action, we call on countries to focus on driving progress by enabling innovation to reach patients, mobilizing investment to prevent, manage, and treat NCDs, breaking down healthcare silos to drive integrated health care services and implementation, and ensuring accountability by measuring progress and striving for high standards of care.

If we collectively deliver in those four areas, we can be confident that we will bend the curve on NCDs, help people stay healthier for longer, improve and save the lives of millions more patients, and deliver large economic gains. We must take the opportunity of the HLM and act now to address this global challenge together.