Side event: “UN Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases: working with Member States to deliver the NCD-related Sustainable Development Goal targets during and beyond COVID-19”

on the occasion of the opening week of the 75th session of the UN General Assembly.

Audience

Heads of State and Government, ministers of health, finance and development.

Date

24 September 2020, 10AM NY time.

Format and media

Remote meeting (through zoom). Registration link. Link to UN Journal. Twitter: #FOTF2020

Objectives

1. To continue the collective journey of the “Friends of the Task Force” towards meeting targets under the health and Non-communicable Diseases (NCD)-related Sustainable Development Goals as well as broader public health goals.

2. To highlight emerging evidence on how COVID-19 and NCDs are interacting and review how the Task Force is supporting Member States respond to these challenges, in line with the 2020 ECOSOC resolution on the work of the Task Force.

3. To present new Task Force led partnerships and initiatives, in line with the 2020 ECOSOC resolution.

4. To present the United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund to Catalyze Country Action for NCDs and Mental Health.

5. To present the 2020 Task Force awards.

Background and rationale

The Task Force: a mechanism to catalyse multisectoral action on the NCD and health-related SDGs

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1 Including the presentation of the WHO-UNDP-UNIATF policy brief “Responding to NCDs during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic” and the Omnibus Resolution on COVID-19.
The United Nations Interagency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of NCDs was established by the UN Secretary General in 2013 to bring the United Nations system together to tackle NCDs. The Task Force reports each year to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).

Bringing together over 40 UN agencies as well as the World Bank and regional development banks, the Task Force promotes a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach. The Task Force uses its networks and expertise to help governments get on track to achieve the NCD-related SDGs, including through cost-effective prevention and control measures that are integrated with efforts to advance universal health coverage, reduce poverty and inequalities, grow economies, take climate action and achieve Agenda 2030 broadly.

One of the greatest obstacles to SDG 3 is unmet demand from countries for technical cooperation to implement the WHO NCD ‘best buys’ and other effective interventions, which require action across sectors such as finance, trade, education, agriculture and urban development as well as health. The SDG 3 Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All reiterates the need for stronger collaboration to achieve the health-related SDGs. It offers an important platform for the Task Force to scale up country support on NCD prevention and control.

The Task Force’s support to integrated health and development responses is even more salient in the context of COVID-19. The pandemic has exposed the effects of inadequate progress in tackling NCDs and their risk factors while positioning NCD action as important for mitigating the impacts of the pandemic and building back better:

- NCDs and their metabolic, behavioural and environmental risk factors are associated with higher susceptibility to COVID-19 infection and increased risk of severe disease and death from COVID-19;
- The pandemic has severely disrupted diagnostic, treatment, rehabilitation and palliation health services for people living with NCDs;
- The pandemic and measures taken in response (e.g. lockdowns) are, for some people, increasing certain behavioural risk factors for NCDs such as physical inactivity and harmful use of alcohol;
- Pressure on health services is likely to increase in the longer-term when services are restored and from possible increases in cardiovascular and respiratory complications among COVID-19 survivors; and
- The public and political attention given to the pandemic has, in some places, led to challenges in maintaining population-level preventive interventions for tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity.

The 2020 ECOSOC resolution on the Task Force calls upon members of the Task Force to continue to work together to identify additional technical resources to enhance their support to Member States in line with the Task Force strategy for 2019–2021, paying particular attention to the needs of Member States during their COVID-19 response and recovery.

Mobilizing resources for the NCD-related SDGs is also critical and the 2020 ECOSOC resolution encourages bilateral and multilateral donors, as well as other relevant stakeholders, to mobilize
resources to catalyse sustainable domestic responses to NCDs and mental health conditions, including through the UN NCD and Mental health Catalytic Fund that is being established by the Task Force. In the first instance the Fund will support countries to address NCDs and mental health as part of COVID-19 response and recovery.

Significant progress has been made by the Task Force in supporting countries to scale-up their responses to NCDs at the country level in the last year, including through:

- Joint programming missions;
- National NCD investment cases; and
- Global joint programmes and global thematic groups.

Member State demand for greater assistance from UN system is growing, especially during and beyond COVID-19, including for the support from the Task Force to cover health-related areas beyond NCDs. This session provides the opportunity to determine ways that the UN system can support Member States ever more effectively.

Organizational arrangements

**Event title**
UN Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases: working with Member States to deliver the NCD-related Sustainable Development Goal targets during and beyond COVID-19

**Organizers**
Russian Federation and the World Health Organization.

**Co-sponsors**
International Development Law Organization, Secretariat of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

**Event description**
- The theme of the event is multisectoral action to support countries achieve the NCD-related SDGs, including as part of their COVID-19 responses.
- The topic of discussion is how to enhance the support that the Task Force is providing to Member States, including mobilising resources for the United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund to Catalyze Country Action on Non-communicable Diseases and Mental Health.
- The format of the side event is a moderated panel discussion followed by an interactive question and answer session with the audience. One short presentation will be given by the Task Force Secretariat.
- The second part of the event will be the 2020 UNIATF Award ceremony.

**Moderator**
- Nick Banatvala – Head of the UN Task Force Secretariat
Co-Chairs
- Russian Federation, Mikhail Murashko, Minister of Health
- WHO, Zsuzsanna Jakab, Deputy Director-General
- WHO, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General

Panelists
- Norway, Aksel Jakobsen, State Secretary of International Development
- Nigeria, Minister of Health (TBC)
- IAEA, Rafael Mariano Grossi, Director General
- Oman, Ahmed Al Saidi, Minister of Health
- IDLO, Jan Beagle, Director General
- Italy, Emanuela Del Re, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Secretariat of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, Adriana Blanco Marquizo, Head of Convention Secretariat
- Philippines, Myrna Cabotaje, Undersecretary of Health
- UK, Jennifer Harries, Deputy Chief Medical Officer
- NCD Alliance, Katie Dain, Chief Executive Officer
- UNDP, name (TBC)

Closing remarks
- WHO, Svetlana Akselrod, Director, Global NCD Platform

Date
24 September 2020

Interpretation
English and Russian.

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