

4. Matters identified in the Convention for action by the Conference of the Parties at its first session
  - Adoption of the rules of procedure for the Conference of the Parties
  - Designation of the permanent Secretariat and arrangements for its functioning
  - Adoption of financial rules for the Conference of the Parties, and financial provisions governing the functioning of the secretariat
  - Adoption of the budget for the first financial period
  - Review of existing and potential sources and mechanisms of assistance
5. Additional matters identified in the Convention for consideration by the Conference of the Parties
  - Reporting
  - Elaboration of guidelines
  - Elaboration of protocols
6. Consideration of a programme of work for the Conference of the Parties
7. Date and venue of the second session of the Conference of the Parties
8. Closure of the session

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## Preventing chronic diseases: A vital investment estimates hundreds of billions of dollars at stake

The World Health Organization (WHO) report, "Preventing Chronic Diseases: a vital investment" says global action to prevent chronic disease could save the lives of 36 million people who would otherwise be dead by 2015.

Currently, chronic diseases are by far the leading cause of death in the world and their impact is steadily growing. The report projects that approximately 17 million people die prematurely each year as a result of the global epidemic of chronic disease.

Faced with the prospect of millions of people dying prematurely and suffering needlessly from heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes, WHO

says the global epidemic of chronic disease must be stopped. Contrary to common perception, this largely invisible epidemic is worst in low and middle income countries, where 80% of all chronic disease deaths occur. The report details the latest findings from nine countries: Brazil, Canada, China, India, Nigeria, Pakistan, the Russian Federation, the United Kingdom and the United Republic of Tanzania.

The report also provides new projections for the economic impact of chronic diseases. For example, China, India and the Russian Federation could forego billions of dollars in national income over the next 10 years as a result of heart disease, stroke, cancer and diabetes. The estimated accumulated losses to China from 2005 to 2015, for example, are US\$ 558 billion, for India US\$ 236 billion, and US\$ 303 billion for the Russian Federation.

"This is a very serious situation, both for public health and for the societies and economies affected, and the toll is projected to increase", said Dr. LEE Jong-wook, WHO Director-General. "The cost of inaction is clear and unacceptable. It is vital that countries review and implement the health actions we know will reduce premature death from chronic diseases."

### The global goal

In this report, WHO proposes a new global goal: to reduce the projected trend of chronic disease death rates by 2% each year until 2015. This would prevent 36 million people dying of chronic diseases in the next 10 years, nearly half of them before they turn 70.

But these problems and their solutions lie outside the control of any one sector. In order to achieve the goal, all sectors from government, private industry, civil society and communities will have to work together. "More and more people are dying too early and suffering too long from chronic diseases," said Dr. Catherine le Galès-Camus, Assistant Director-General of Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health, "We know what to do, and so we must do it now."

### Preventable risk factors

The vast majority of cases of chronic diseases are caused by a small number of known and preventable risk factors. Three of the most important are unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and tobacco use. Globally, these risk factors are increasing as people's dietary habits change to foods high in fats

and sugars, and people's work and living situations involve much less physical activity. Increased marketing and sales of tobacco products in low and middle income countries mean greater exposure to the risk of tobacco.

One billion people globally are overweight or obese, and WHO predicts that will rise beyond 1.5 billion by 2015 without immediate action.

The report examines the vast evidence-based knowledge about inexpensive and cost-effective measures that can produce rapid health gains and for which the benefits far outweigh the costs. Examples include: salt reduction in processed foods, improved school meals and taxation of tobacco products, which is not only cost-effective but also raises revenues for governments.

### Global voices in support

We cannot afford to say "we must tackle other diseases first – HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis –

then we will deal with chronic diseases. If we wait even 10 years, we will find that the problem is even larger and more expensive to address." President Olusegun Obasanjo, Nigeria.

"Although chronic diseases are among the most common and costly health problems, they are also among the most preventable. Public health efforts on health promotion and disease prevention are critical to achieving better health outcomes for people worldwide." Ujjal Dosanjh, Minister of Health, Canada.

"We can measure the loss of income to the Chinese economy alone at a staggering US\$ 550 billion over the next 10 years. In response to these facts, the Ministry of Health of China, with the support of WHO, has been developing the first medium- and long-term high level national plan for chronic disease prevention and control." WANG Longde, Vice-Minister of Health, the People's Republic of China.

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