



General Assembly

Sixty-sixth session

10th plenary meeting

Wednesday, 21 September 2011, 6 p.m.
New York

Official Records

President: Mr. Al-Nasser (Qatar)

The meeting was called to order at 6.10 p.m.

High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases

Agenda item 117 (continued)

Follow-up to the outcome of the Millennium Summit

The President (*spoke in Arabic*): In accordance with resolution 31/3, of 18 October 1976, I now give the floor to the observer of the Commonwealth Secretariat.

Ms. Anie (Commonwealth Secretariat): The Commonwealth Secretariat is honoured to make a statement at this High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases. Commonwealth heads of Government called for the United Nations to host such a summit when they last met, in Trinidad and Tobago in 2009. We are pleased that this call to action has contributed to the momentum behind this meeting today.

The Commonwealth family comprises 54 countries on five continents. We account for a third of the world's population, a quarter of its countries and a fifth of its trade. We are a family of varied countries — rich and poor, large and small, but all aspiring to the shared principles of overcoming poverty, ignorance and disease, raising standards of living and achieving a more equitable society.

Of the estimated 19.5 million deaths in the Commonwealth in 2008, 9.3 million were due to

non-communicable diseases (NCDs), including mental and blood disorders and oral diseases. In comparison, 44 per cent of deaths were caused by communicable diseases and maternal, perinatal and nutritional conditions, and 9 per cent resulted from injuries, including road traffic fatalities. One third of the deaths from NCDs occurred before the age of 60 years.

The Commonwealth is greatly and adversely affected by the double burden of communicable and non-communicable diseases alike. Within our 54 member countries, 65 per cent of our 2.4 billion citizens are affected by HIV. We acknowledge the increasing pressure placed upon already overstretched health systems from this double burden of disease and, therefore, the need for a comprehensive and integrated response.

The Commonwealth acknowledges the link between NCDs and poverty and, furthermore, the threat this epidemic poses to sustainable development. We are cognizant that unless there is a high-level commitment to responding to the NCD epidemic, the gains that Commonwealth members have made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals will be threatened. For that reason, this high-level event is particularly timely.

The Commonwealth itself has confirmed its commitment to respond to the NCD epidemic and increase the ability of countries to respond to the emerging health crisis. In that regard, Commonwealth heads of Government, in their 2009 statement on commonwealth action to combat non-communicable

This record contains the text of speeches delivered in English and of the interpretation of speeches delivered in the other languages. Corrections should be submitted to the original languages only. They should be incorporated in a copy of the record and sent under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned to the Chief of the Verbatim Reporting Service, room U-506. Corrections will be issued after the end of the session in a consolidated corrigendum.



diseases, noted with concern that the poorest people are the most vulnerable to the impacts of these diseases. That statement has since been operationalized into the Commonwealth road map on NCDs, which outlines activities for the Commonwealth Secretariat to pursue, including developing advocacy strategies, informing and influencing global thinking, disseminating knowledge about best practices, building capacity and institutional strengthening.

The Commonwealth Secretariat chose “Non-communicable diseases: a priority for the Commonwealth” as the theme for the 2011 Commonwealth health ministers’ meeting. Furthermore, the theme for the 2012 meeting will be focused on the linkages between non-communicable and communicable diseases.

Mr. Cazeau (Haiti), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Young people are an important area of focus. As 60 per cent of its citizens are under 30 years of age, the Commonwealth has a strong focus on young people. Encouraging meaningful youth engagement and participation is central to the Commonwealth Plan of Action for Youth Empowerment.

The Commonwealth, furthermore, continues to draw attention to the gender dimensions of NCDs, specifically by recognizing the different prevalence rates of the major risk factors and diseases between men and women. Importantly, too, it is often women and girls who act as principal caregivers for household members who became unwell. The burden of care has significant socio-economic implications for them and their families. The theme of the Commonwealth for 2011, “Women as agents of change”, was chosen in recognition of women’s contribution to society and emphasizes the fact that when they prosper, their communities also prosper.

We are pleased by the examples of good practice emerging in the Commonwealth. We commend the response of the various regions and their leadership on NCDs. In particular, we note the pioneering holding of the Regional Summit of Heads of Government of the Caribbean Community on Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases, in 2007. We commend the work of civil society, which has informed and empowered others to better prevent and control NCDs throughout the world. The Commonwealth fully supports the global community’s efforts and commitments towards

preventing and controlling the spread of NCDs. We will continue to work with member countries and partners across all sectors to ensure an accelerated, multisectoral and evidence-based response to the epidemic. We further commit to deepening Commonwealth efforts beyond this event.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with resolution 64/124, of 16 December 2009, I now give the floor to the observer of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean.

Mr. Amoruso (Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean) (*spoke in Italian; English text provided by the delegation*): It is an honour to take part in this High-level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases on behalf of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean (PAM), and to share with the General Assembly the tangible results achieved in this field by our unique network of parliamentarians in the Mediterranean.

As many General Assembly members know, the Parliamentary Assembly was established in 2006 to bring together parliamentarians from the Mediterranean region. We are an inter-State organization comprised of 26 member States and resulting from the maturation of a regional political process initiated within the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

After having addressed the High-level Meeting on the Millennium Development Goals one year ago, on 22 September 2010 (see A/65/PV.9), I am proud to again have the unique opportunity to address the General Assembly on behalf of parliamentarians from the northern and southern shores of *mare nostrum*. This is a symbol of our unity in making another decisive step towards the goals set for 2015, which is a priority that constantly leads our actions.

As highlighted by the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean of the World Health Organization (WHO) and as shown in the statistics for the rest of the Mediterranean region, the burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) on the public health services of Mediterranean countries calls for immediate and coordinated action at the regional and international levels.

We, the parliamentarians of the Mediterranean, wish to take full advantage of this High-level Meeting to call for concerted action in monitoring, mobilizing appropriate resources and strengthening capacities to pursue the fight against these threats to life and

socio-economic development. We are doing so in what is a decisive time for our region and in line with the Global Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, endorsed by the World Health Assembly in 2000, and its related Action Plan, adopted in 2008 by WHO and Member States.

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean has mobilized its unique multisectoral network in the Mediterranean to support United Nations action, in coordination with Member States, as well as with other international and regional bodies. PAM has strongly supported and welcomed the inauguration of the WHO Mediterranean Centre for Health Risk Reduction in Tunisia in July 2010. We intend to continue to assist the Centre in promoting interregional cooperation, notably by strengthening public health capacities to tackle the growing burden of NCDs in the Mediterranean.

In close cooperation with the United Nations system and a wide range of partners, the Parliamentary Assembly of the Mediterranean is already mobilizing its network, using a multisectoral approach to create a pool of high-level members of Parliament, experts and non-governmental organization representatives in the region to address specific issues in line with the priorities on the international agenda.

An example of such efforts was the most recent meeting of PAM's panel on economic issues, held at the United Nations Office at Geneva in May, in close cooperation with the Inter-Agency Cluster on Trade and Productive Capacity. We wish to assure General Assembly members today that this network will fully contribute to implementing the actions proposed in the Political Declaration (A/66/2, annex) adopted at the High-level Meeting.

On behalf of PAM, I wish to solemnly assure the Assembly that our unique Mediterranean network of parliamentarians remains ready to use its capacity to legislate, oversee our executives and vote on budgets so as to ensure that the United Nations agenda on NCDs is implemented as a top priority in our region.

The Acting President (*spoke in French*): I declare closed the High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases.

The General Assembly has thus concluded this stage of its consideration of agenda item 117.

The meeting rose at 6.30 p.m.