

**Statement by Ms Rigmor Aasrud,  
Deputy Minister of Health and Care Services, Norway**

President,  
Director General,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

The progress report on the Millennium Development Goals mid-point states that the health MDGs are behind schedule. International efforts to achieve these goals need to be strengthened. Norway is strongly committed in the fulfilment of the MDGs. It is unacceptable that 10 million children die every year from diseases that could easily been prevented. It is unacceptable that half a million women still die each year from treatable and preventable complications of pregnancy and childbirth. And it is unacceptable that millions of people in developing countries die of diseases that cannot be treated because essential drugs are not available or affordable. Furthermore, none of the MDGs will be achieved unless we solve the global health personnel crisis.

Norway highly welcomes and appreciates the increasing focus of WHO on the health MDGs. We are deeply engaged in the fulfilment of these goals with a special emphasis on MDG 4 and 5. We strongly support the work of GAVI and take active part in the global campaign and the international health partnership.

Closely linked to the achievement of the MDGs is the challenge of climate change as a serious threat to human health. With climate change high on everybody's agenda it is our duty to ensure that possible adverse consequences for human health are explored and prevented to the extent possible. We would therefore like to express our appreciation of the Director General's commitment to put climate change and health high on the global agenda.

Norway is concerned with the rapid increase in food prices that is leading to a global food crisis. The crises may not only negatively affect the attainment of the MDGs but have impact on the food situation in all parts of the world. This will necessitate that the WHO strengthens cooperation with partners outside the health sector to plan and develop cross sectoral

plans that curtail the adverse effect on health and ensure necessary supply of food.

Mr. President,

Communicable diseases have traditionally contributed most to the burden of disease in both the developed and the developing world. Social and economic change together with improved ability to measure the health situation, have led to an increase in the focus on non-communicable diseases. Risk factors like alcohol, tobacco, obesity and lack of physical activity constitute a considerable part of the burden of disease also in developing countries.

Norway highly welcomes the Secretariat's proposal for a NCD action plan, as well as the proposed resolution on a strategy on the harmful use of alcohol, originally presented by Rwanda on behalf of the AFRO group. The NCDs constitute a major domestic challenge for us. We are strongly committed to continue the work of counteracting NCDs. The WHO's capacity to deal systematically with this issue should be strengthened further in the time to come.

To work effectively it is imperative that the WHO is organised and structured in an appropriate manner. We are very pleased to see the Director-General's efforts striving to adhere to the UN-reform. We would like to encourage her in the continuing work to make the UN deliver as one.

The intergovernmental working group on public health, innovation and intellectual property has demonstrated the need for efficient collaboration between different international organisations. Norway will be strongly committed to the follow-up of the global strategy and the action plan that we expect this assembly to adopt later this week.

Mr. President,

Climate change, Communicable diseases and NCDs constitute factors with a substantial social gradient. These health risks are unequally distributed, between countries and within every country. It is Norway's belief that these challenges must be met, not only to face the negative impact on health, but

to counter increased inequality in health, and to reach the Millennium Development goals. I am looking forward to the discussion and follow-up of the report from the Commission on Social determinants of health.

Thank you Mr. President