GENEVA—Delegates at the World Health Assembly today came to agreement on vector control, a number of issues related to noncommunicable diseases, as well as chemicals management and WHO reporting on the Sustainable Development Goals.

## Vector Control

Delegates welcomed the strategic approach proposed in the Global Vector Control Response (GVCR) 2017-2030. The response aims to prevent epidemics of vector-borne diseases in all countries, reduce the incidence of these diseases by at least 60% and cut mortality rates by at least 75% by 2030.

Vector-borne diseases account for more than 17% of all infectious diseases, causing illness, disability, disfigurement and more than 700,000 deaths annually

The response focuses on locally adapted and sustainable vector control methods to save lives, reduce sickness, and improve cost efficiencies. It will tackle multiple vectors and diseases with involvement across many sectors, including environment, urban planning, and education as well as health.

The response will also promote research to supply the evidence base required for disease control and elimination. It groups country actions under four pillars: strengthening intersectoral and intra-sectoral action, mobilizing communities, enhancing surveillance and monitoring, and scaling up and integrating vector-control interventions. It emphasizes the need for strong country leadership and support, and the importance of ensuring that vector control is a core element of national health strategies and plans to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

**Noncommunicable diseases**

Delegates endorsed an updated set of policy options and interventions to help countries meet global targets to prevent and control noncommunicable diseases. The new set includes 16 interventions known as “best buys” within WHO's global action plan for the prevention and control of NCDs 2013-2020. The effectiveness of the “best buys” has recently been re-examined and reaffirmed by the WHO Secretariat.

Particular focus is placed on measures to reduce people’s exposure to factors that increase the risk of developing NCDs - including through taxation of tobacco and sugar-sweetened beverages; banning tobacco advertising, and reformulation of

food products to reduce salt content. Interventions to improve management and control of NCDs include providing drug therapy for diabetes and hypertension, counselling for people who have had a heart attack or stroke or those at high risk of a cardiovascular event, and cervical cancer screening for women.

Delegates noted WHO’s work to advance the NCD agenda, including the ongoing preparations

for the third United Nations General Assembly High-level meeting on the prevention and control of NCDs to be held in 2018.

**Cancer**

The Delegates also endorsed a set of measures to improve and scale up access to prevention; early diagnosis: prompt, accessible treatment, and palliative care for cancer. They highlighted the need to intensify cancer prevention and control as critical to achieving global targets to reduce the burden of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs).

Cancer is the second leading cause of death globally. About 70% of cancer deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries, and the rate of deaths is increasing fastest in such settings, placing greater strain on already vulnerable health systems.

Delegates called on WHO to promote access for all people to affordable cancer diagnosis and treatment and to provide countries with technical guidance on identifying and implementing priority cancer control interventions. They committed to ensure adequate resources to support implementation of national cancer control plans and to strengthen health systems to provide early diagnosis and treatment services for all cancer patients. They urged WHO to develop a world report on cancer containing evidence-informed guidance for scaling up cancer control. This will be prepared jointly with the WHO International Agency for Research on Cancer and the first edition is expected in 2019.

## Tobacco control

Delegates adopted a decision requesting that the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) provide information on outcomes of their biennial meeting to future World Health Assembly meetings. The WHO FCTC Secretariat was identified as the conduit for requesting and sharing this this information.ÂÂ They also requested the WHO Director-General to provide information on relevant tobacco-related Health Assembly resolutions and decisions to future meetings of the COP. The eighth session of the COP will be held from 1-6 October, 2018, in Geneva, Switzerland.

The WHO FCTC is the first treaty negotiated under WHO's treaty-making power. To date, it comprises 180 Parties and is one of the most rapidly and widely embraced treaties in UN history.

## Deafness and hearing loss

Delegates agreed to intensify action to prevent deafness and hearing loss. Some 360 million people across the world live with disabling hearing loss, a total that includes 32 million children and nearly 180 million older adults. Nearly 90% of the people with hearing loss live in low- and middle-income countries, which often lack resources and strategies to address hearing loss. Most cases of hearing loss can be avoided, and can be successfully managed through cost-effective interventions.

The new resolution calls on governments to integrate strategies for ear and hearing care within the framework of their primary health care systems; to establish training programmes for health workers; implement prevention and screening programmes for high-risk populations; and improve access to affordable, cost-effective, high-quality, assistive hearing technologies and products. It emphasizes the importance of ensuring universal access to prevention and care.

The resolution also called on the Secretariat to prepare a world report on hearing and to provide support to countries to help them reduce hearing loss, including that caused by exposure to noise.

**Childhood Obesity**

Delegates welcomed a plan to implement recommendations made by the WHO Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity. The recommendations aim to reverse the rising trend of children and adolescents becoming overweight and obese. The implementation plan highlights the importance of tackling environments that facilitate access to and promotion of unhealthy foods and make it hard for children to be physically active.ÂÂ It focuses on preventing obesity throughout the life course, from the earliest years.

The implementation plan aims to help countries to fulfil commitments on addressing obesity that they have already made. These include pledges contained in the WHO global action plan for the prevention and control of NCDs, the comprehensive implementation plan for maternal, infant and young child nutrition and as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The implementation plan stresses encouraging infants and young children to choose healthy foods through supportive policies and interventions, including taxation, marketing and labelling. The plan focuses on supporting and building healthy habits that last through the life course. It also highlights the need for shaping school environments and curricula as well as community environments to support healthy lifestyle choices – including the taking of physical exercise.

The plan includes recommendations on interventions to treat overweight and obesity in children, plus measures to prevent unhealthy weight gain in infants and young children.

**Chemicals management**

Delegates approved a new road map to enhance the health sector engagement in the sound management of chemicals. Worldwide, 1.3 million lives are lost every year due to exposures to selected chemicals. However, many countries still lack the necessary regulatory and policy frameworks and institutional capacities to assess and manage the health impacts of chemicals, such as lead and pesticides. There is wide agreement that stronger engagement of the health sector is crucial to address these issues.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) call for countries to reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals by 2030 and improve the management of chemicals and wastes by 2020. Today's road map highlights four action areas: risk reduction, knowledge and evidence, institutional capacity, and leadership and coordination. Individual actions include phasing out lead containing paints, regulating chemicals, improving capacity to respond to chemical emergencies and poisonings, strengthening surveillance and monitoring, and

improving awareness and education of the health impacts of chemical exposures.

WHO will work with countries to implement the road map and will report progress to the Health Assembly in 2019.

**Sustainable Development Goals**

Delegates reviewed a report on progress towards the health-related Sustainable Development Goals, and asked the Director-General to continue reporting to Member States every two years on global and regional progress towards achieving the health-related SDGs. They also requested the Director-General to include in this regular reporting information on progress towards strengthening surgical and anaesthetic care.