10 October 2017 | ISLAMABAD – Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), announced today the establishment of a new High-level global Commission on Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs). The announcement came at the 64th Session of WHO's Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean being held in Islamabad, 9-12 October.

The commission's aim is to identify innovative ways to curb the world's biggest causes of death and extend life expectancy for millions of people. The commission will support ongoing political efforts to accelerate action on cardiovascular disease, cancers, diabetes and respiratory disease, as well as reducing suffering from mental health issues and the impacts of violence and injuries.

The High-level global Commission will be chaired by Dr Sania Nishtar, a prominent global advocate for action against NCDs, former Federal Minister of the government of Pakistan and civil society leader. Dr Nishtar has also previously served as co-chair of the WHO Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity.

NCDs kill approximately 40 million people globally each year, accounting for 70% of all deaths. About 15 million of those deaths are in people between the ages of 30 and 69. Low- and middle-income countries are particularly affected by NCDs with more than 80% of all deaths from NCDs occurring in these countries. Violence and injuries take an overwhelming toll on young people, particularly boys.

In 2015, world leaders committed to reduce premature deaths from NCDs by one third by 2030 as part of the Sustainable Development Goals. Recent WHO reports indicate that the world will struggle to meet that target.

"We urgently need new approaches and action on a dramatically different scale if we are to stop people dying unnecessarily from noncommunicable diseases," said Dr Tedros.

"I am committed to engaging the very best people in the world to address our health challenges," he added. "So, I am especially pleased that Dr Nishtar has agreed to lead this commission. I know she will bring impressive knowledge, credibility, and commitment to this effort."

Later this month ministers and other health leaders from around the world will review progress in Montevideo, Uruguay at the WHO Global Conference on Noncommunicable Diseases, co-hosted by WHO and the President of Uruguay. Governments and other stakeholders will meet again at the third United Nations High-level meeting on NCDs in 2018.