11 July 2014 | New York – UN Member States have reaffirmed their commitment to take bold measures to reduce the avoidable burden of noncommunicable diseases. These ailments, including heart disease and stroke, cancer, diabetes and lung disease kill 38 million people every year, many of them before they reach the age of 70. Most of these largely preventable deaths occur in developing countries, where this epidemic threatens to undermine social and economic development.

Member States, gathered for the second time in three years at the United Nations in New York to discuss this topic, pledged to intensify efforts to combat the growing menace of NCDs. They acknowledged that progress has been too slow and uneven since 2011, when the UN General Assembly adopted the Political Declaration and pledged to better protect the lives of their people.

”Three years ago we agreed that it is time to act,” UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said in a message. “The global epidemic of non-communicable diseases is a major and growing challenge to development.”

He also noted that “success will depend on finding new ways to strengthen the ability of countries to adopt bolder measures,” calling for strong leadership and action from governments, the private sector and others.

Under the leadership of the World Health Organization (WHO), the international community agreed in 2011 on global mechanisms including a Global NCD Action Plan. This plan aims to reduce the number of premature deaths from NCDs by 25% by 2025, in part by addressing factors such as tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity that increase people's risk of developing these diseases.

The United Nations, through an Interagency Task Force established by the Secretary-General, is providing support to developing countries. Civil society, academia and the private sector contribute to NCD prevention and control worldwide through a Global Coordination Mechanism, and achievements are measured by a set of joint indicators.

“The obesity epidemic has been getting worse, not better, for more than three decades,” stressed WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan. “Industry practices, especially the marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to children, play a contributory role.”

She noted that the article in the political declaration calling for collaboration with the private sector “has not been fully implemented. Healthier food formulations are neither affordable nor accessible in large parts of the developing world. Unfortunately, the unhealthiest foods are usually the cheapest and most convenient.”

The most recent WHO NCD country profiles give a detailed picture on the situation in 194

Member States and identify existing gaps and weaknesses. They also indicate that countries need to do more to reduce the toll of death and disease from NCDs. As one of the results of the New York meeting WHO will prepare a Framework for Country Action together with partners. WHO was also tasked to establish systems to register and publish contributions of the private sector, philanthropies and civil society to the achievement of the nine voluntary targets of the Global NCD Action Plan.

The first UN General Assembly High-level on NCDs took place in 2011 and resulted in the adoption of a Political Declaration that put NCDs high on the development agenda. In 2018, the UN General Assembly will convene a third high-level meeting to take stock of progress.