Several recent media articles [1] are creating **misinformation** and **confusion** in the **public health arena**. These articles are erroneously suggesting that in working to reduce **noncommunicable diseases** (NCDs) such as cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes, the **World Health Organization** (WHO) **receives funding from** the **food** and **beverage industry**. The allegations in these articles are **wrong**.

Because of WHO's role in the development of norms, standards and guidelines for protecting and improving people's health, WHO uses a rigorous process to protect its work from undue industry influence. The private sector plays an important role along with other key stakeholders in taking action to improve health. When WHO works with the private sector, the Organization takes all possible measures to ensure its work to develop policy and guidelines is protected from industry influence.

- WHO may engage with the private sector on occasion, but according to WHO policy, funds may not be sought or accepted from enterprises that have a direct commercial interest in the outcome of the project toward which they would be contributing.
- All experts on WHO advisory groups for developing norms, standards and guidelines are required to disclose interests regarding the advisory committee's area of work. If a declared interest is potentially significant, then the expert is either excluded from the meeting or given a restricted role.

For this reason the Organization does not accept funding from the food and beverage manufacturers for work on NCD prevention and control.

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is unique among WHO's Regional Offices because it contains two separate legal entities – the WHO Regional Office for the Americas (AMRO) and the health agency of the Organization of the American States (PAHO). In some areas the two entities may have variations in policy. For example, as mentioned in the media reports, in its capacity as PAHO, food and beverage manufacturers have contributed financially as part of a multi-sector forum to address NCDs.

The *Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases,* agreed by global leaders at the UN General Assembly in 2011, called on the international community to undertake a series of actions. One of these actions was to call on the private sector to promote measures to implement WHO recommendations to reduce exposure to the risk factors which contribute to NCDs. The WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health commits WHO to hold discussions with the private sector, but the Organization will not take money from private companies active in food and beverage production for work on NCD prevention and control as implied by the media articles.

WHO is committed to reducing the public health impacts associated with NCDs. Hundreds of staff both at headquarters and in WHO's Regional and Country Offices work to develop evidence, tools and effective interventions to help national governments take the action needed to prevent NCDs and reduce their impact, by saving lives and reducing illness. Often, WHO's work focuses on policies and programmes to create health-promoting environments and reduce the four principal risk factors that increase the risk of these diseases: tobacco use, physical inactivity, unhealthy diet and harmful use of alcohol.

Because NCDs contribute to 36 million deaths, or 63%, of all deaths globally each year, they are a priority for the Organization. Of the 36 million people who die annually from these diseases, 14 million are under 70 years of age, and regarded therefore as premature and largely preventable deaths. About 80% of the deaths related to noncommunicable disease occur in the developing world. WHO appreciates the support of governments, civil society and other partners who are working closely with us to reduce the death, illness and disability from these diseases.

More information:
The *Political Declaration of the High-level Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases* *www.who.int/nmh/events/un_ncd_summit2011/en/index.html*