

54 UN member states call for action on Non-communicable diseases at ECOSOC

Language English



The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of the United Nations recently highlighted the burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) on women and girls and called on the international community to take action on addressing NCDs and strengthen health systems. In a communiqué issued after a high-level meeting from June 28 to July 2 in New York, ECOSOC's 54 member countries recognized, "the increasing incidence of NCDs and their impact on women."

They stressed the need for multi-sectoral responses and the integration of cost-effective interventions aimed at combating these diseases. "We must improve access to health systems for women and girls, including through gender-sensitive national strategies and public-health policies and programmes that are comprehensive, affordable and better geared to meeting their needs; and that encourage women's active participation in their design and implementation," the communiqué read.

The theme of this year's ECOSOC meeting was Gender Equality. ECOSOC serves as the central forum for discussing international economic and social issues, and for formulating policy recommendations addressed to Member States and the United Nations. Some of its main tasks in relation to health and equity include the promotion of higher standards of living, the identification of social and health problems and the advancement of universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. The official follow up to the ECOSOC High-Level Segment takes place in the UN General Assembly, to which its outcomes are forwarded.

The discussion on the 'ECOSOC report' will take place during the next General Assembly session which starts September 14, 2010. In the past, themes which were addressed in the High-Level Segment received special attention at General Assembly sessions. Placing NCDs on the agenda of the next UN General Assembly will be a major step in gaining universal attention of the need for health systems strengthening and policies that focus on the burden of NCDs for women and girls, and the general population.

The NCD Alliance of federations will raise strengthening health systems to address NCDs and other chronic conditions as a major issue for the September 2011 UN Summit on Non-communicable Diseases.

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