

Civil society unites to mobilise action on NCDs at WHO AFRO Regional Committee Meeting

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The WHO Regional Committee Meeting for the Africa Region concluded this week in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. While NCDs were not discussed under a dedicated agenda item, they were featured under agenda items throughout the programme. Civil society representatives from the NCD Alliance network made several statements, ensuring that messages of support and urgency were clearly heard.

In his comments to open the meeting, the President of Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, His Excellency, Dr Mulatu Teshome, observed that in the coming decades both NCDs and communicable diseases will pose significant challenges to development, and stressed the importance of strengthening health systems and preparedness to address both current and emerging challenges.

Two statements were delivered under the Agenda Item for Agenda 2030, calling for the development and adoption of a WHO AFRO Regional NCD Framework. Dr Mucumbitsi Joseph, the Vice-Chair of the East African NCD Alliance spoke also on behalf of the global NCD Alliance and a coalition of over twenty partners from all over African and overseas which signed the [statement](#) [1]. Mr Wondu Bekele, General Manger of the Mathiwos Wondu - YeEthiopia Cancer Society delivered a [statement](#) [2] on behalf of the Union for International Cancer Control and NCD Alliance. Both statements focussed on the particular need for urgent action on four key areas: development of policies and strategic plans, adequate financing, health systems strengthening, and health information systems.

The Regional Committee also discussed a dedicated agenda item on oral health. Health ministers of the WHO African Region endorsed a [strategy](#) [3] for Member States to improve oral health and enhance control of NCDs in general. Dr Muluaem Tegegnework, President of the Ethiopian Dental Professionals' Association, delivered a [statement](#) [4] on behalf of FDI World Dental Federation welcoming the strategy and congratulating WHO AFRO on its alignment with the global NCD agenda. [He highlighted](#) [5] Ethiopia's high oral disease burden, limited financial resources for oral health and very low density of dental practitioners and called on Member States to speed up mobilization of resources and implement innovative and bold actions that address oral disease within the wider framework of NCDs.

Discussions on NCDs also took place in the context of an agenda item on ageing and health. African Ministers of Health endorsed an [implementation framework](#) [6] for the Global Strategy and Plan of Action on Ageing and Health.

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The WHO Regional Director for Africa, Dr Matshidiso Moeti, [called for greater political commitment](#) [7] to facilitate programmes on awareness and advocacy as well as provision of adequate services for the elderly. “To ensure healthy ageing, countries in the Region need to adopt national policies on ageing and take concrete actions to implement the Global Strategy on Ageing,” she urged. “Putting in place appropriate preventive care of NCDs in younger ages, fostering age-friendly primary health care for older populations and strengthening family, community and social support for the elderly are important first steps towards this.”

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[1] https://ncdalliance.org/sites/default/files/resource_files/Statement%20NCD%20Alliance%20and%20EA%20NCD%20Alliance_Agenda%20Item%2016.pdf

[2] https://ncdalliance.org/sites/default/files/resource_files/Statement%20Union%20for%20International%20Cancer%20Control%20and%20NCD%20Alliance_Agenda%20Item%2016.pdf

[3] http://www.afro.who.int/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=10216&Itemid=2593

[4] http://www.fdiworldental.org/media/93055/fdi_statement_to_the_66th_session_of_the_who_regional_committee_for_africa.pdf

[5] <http://www.fdiworldental.org/media/news/news/fdi-welcomes-the-proposed-who-oral-health-strategy-for-africa.aspx>

[6] http://www.afro.who.int/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=10219&Itemid=2593

[7] <http://www.afro.who.int/en/media-centre/pressreleases/item/8913-ministers-of-health-commit-to-make-africa-a-region-in-which-everyone-can-live-a-long-healthy-and-productive-life.html>