

## Global conference takes notable steps in accelerating fight against NCDs

Language English



President Bachelet of Chile speaking at the Global Conference on NCDs in Montevideo © Juliette Wittich via twitter

Last week's [global conference in Uruguay](#) [1] took notable steps that should accelerate momentum in the fight against NCDs ahead of the UN High-Level Meeting (UNHLM) on NCDs in 2018, many of which received little media attention.

Tobacco control champion President Dr Tabaré Vázquez of Uruguay was appointed co-chair of the [WHO High-level Commission on NCDs](#) [2], whose mandate is to guide preparations for the UNHLM. "Governments like Uruguay's are examples to the world, where the leadership from the very highest level strives to defend and advance the sovereign right of protecting the health of their people," said WHO Director-General Dr Tedros.

Vázquez' co-chair, Dr Sania Nishtar, revealed later on Twitter that she met her co-chair at the conference and they agreed: "Integrity & transparency will underpin our work."

In fact, governments at the conference endorsed the [Montevideo Roadmap 2018-2030 on NCDs as a Sustainable Development Priority](#) [3]. The roadmap is intended to guide global preparations for the UNHLM by highlighting barriers to NCD policy implementation and calling for "enhanced political leadership to advance strategic, outcome-oriented action across sectors".

Vázquez was joined at the conference by Presidents Macri of Argentina, Bachelet of Chile, Cartes of Paraguay, Mugabe of Zimbabwe and more than 20 health ministers, an encouraging sign that the NCD response is beginning to garner essential political will ahead of the HLM. "Political commitment is the rule of the game to mobilise all sectors," noted Dr Tedros [in his speech](#) [4].

While prominent political leadership is crucial to reducing the toll from NCDs, Dr Tedros demonstrated his commitment to collaborate with a broad range of stakeholders. NCD Alliance chaired a meeting with Dr Tedros and representatives of 20 civil society organisations present at the conference to discuss the UNHLM, the next WHO General Programme of Work and how to strengthen collaboration with NCD civil society. "I met with civil society organisations (CSOs) here in Montevideo and was impressed by their expertise and engagement," Dr Tedros said afterwards.

[NCD Alliance CEO Katie Dain spoke](#) [5] on day one of the conference. "Please let me be clear," she said. "What I highlight here isn't just rhetoric – on the ground, where children, adolescents, men and women live and die, very little is

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changing. We are tired of empty promises. Governments are failing their populations and sleep walking into a sick future.”

Dain called for a wake-up call that would lead to a:

- Sense of urgency and political courage for action,
- Scale-up of resources commensurate with the burden, and
- Sharpened focus on implementing what works.

NCDA's priority messages included calling for a strong preparatory process for the UNHLM next year, and for economic and political blocs to integrate NCDs into their agendas. Following on from the presence of Argentina's President Macri at the conference, NCDA and CLAS (Coalición Latinoamérica Saludable) have written to the leader, calling on him to ensure that NCDs are on the agenda of the G20. Argentina will take over the G20 presidency in December.

(See [the CLAS letter](#) [6] and [the NCDA letter](#) [7].)

At the conference, the NCD Alliance coordinated a swift response from over two dozen CSOs to the [announcement that Zimbabwe President Robert Mugabe would become WHO Goodwill Ambassador for NCDs in Africa](#) [8]. The appointment was later rescinded following widespread criticism, and [NCDA welcomed the decision](#) [9].

“I have listened carefully to all who have expressed their concerns, and heard the different issues that they have raised,” [said Tedros in a statement](#) [10]. “It is my aim to build a worldwide movement for global health. This movement must work for everyone and include everyone.”

In addition to the plenaries, multiple workshops took place, while at high-level sessions ministers reported on country actions and progress. These include bold actions taken by countries like Sri Lanka, whose Minister of Health Dr. Rajitha Senaratne announced Sri Lanka to be tobacco production free by 2020. NCDA organised a Breakthrough Breakfast that asked: ‘What does meaningful involvement of people living with #NCDs look like’? One answer came from Rakiya Kikgori of Nigeria, who represented the Our Views Our Voices advisory group: “People living with NCDs must have a say in the policies that affect their lives.”

The conference also saw the relaunch of the [Tackling NCDs document](#) [11], otherwise known as ‘Best buys’ for tackling NCDs. The latest iteration is based on an update of Appendix 3 of the Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs 2013–2020 as endorsed by the World Health Assembly in May.

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**Tags:** [UN High-Level Meeting](#) [12]

**Category - News:** Announcements

**Related Resource:** [Towards a roadmap to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the WHO European Region](#) [13]

[NCD Alliance comments on the Updated Appendix 3](#) [14]

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### Links

[1] <http://www.who.int/conferences/global-ncd-conference/en/>

[2] <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/statements/2017/ncd-commission/en/>

[3] <https://ncdalliance.org/news-events/news/governments-commit-to-reduce-suffering-and-deaths-from-ncds>

[4] <http://www.who.int/dg/speeches/2017/opening-ncds-conference/en/>

[5] <https://ncdalliance.org/news-events/blog/120-million-premature-deaths-how-many-more-reasons-do-we-need-for-action>

[6] <https://ncdalliance.org/sites/default/files/CLAS%20Carta%20a%20Pres%20Macri%20G20%2017%20Oct%2020>

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[7] <https://ncdalliance.org/sites/default/files/Letter%20to%20President%20Macri.pdf>

[8] <https://ncdalliance.org/news-events/news/appointment-of-president-robert-mugabe-as-who-goodwill-ambassador-for-ncds-in-africa->

[9] <https://ncdalliance.org/news-events/news/rescinded-appointment-of-president-robert-mugabe-as-who-goodwill-ambassador-for-ncds-in-africa-ncd-alliance-response>

[10] <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/statements/2017/goodwill-ambassador-rescinded/en/>

[11] <http://www.who.int/ncds/management/best-buys/en/>

[12] <https://old.ncdalliance.org/taxonomy/term/639>

[13] <https://old.ncdalliance.org/resources/towards-a-roadmap-to-implement-the-2030-agenda-for-sustainable-development-in-the-who-european-region>

[14] <https://old.ncdalliance.org/resources/ncd-alliance-comments-on-the-updated-appendix-3>