

UN interactive hearing: Civil Society calls for more action on NCDs

Language English



James Chau, WHO Goodwill Ambassador for SDGs and Health, delivered a rousing keynote speech at the interactive hearing for the HLM on NCDs, on 5 July 2018. © WHO

James Chau, WHO Goodwill Ambassador for SDGs and Health, delivered a rousing [keynote address](#) [1] during the opening segment of the [interactive hearing for the third UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs](#) [2] (UN HLM on NCDs) on 5 July 2018.

Chau called upon private sector partners such as Big Soda and Big Sugar to “be better than the tobacco industry” and support labelling of products and actually deliver on commitments to reformulate products. He also urged the pharmaceutical industry to become part of the solution to the NCD burden, by making insulin and other essential medicines affordable and accessible.

“NCDs are rooted in inequality, whether they are inequalities of geography, race, income or gender. We need a response that recognizes and acts on this.” – James Chau, WHO Goodwill Ambassador for SDGs and Health

In addition, Chau called on Member States to ensure commitments to address mental health and air pollution are included in the outcome document of the UN HLM.

Part of UN HLM process

The interactive stakeholder hearing was convened by the President of the UN General Assembly (PGA) of the as part of the preparatory process for the UN HLM. [Per the modalities for the UN HLM on NCDs](#) [3], it brought together civil society, philanthropic foundations, academia, medical associations, the private sector and broader communities to discuss priorities for the HLM on NCDs.

The interactive hearing consisted of [four panels](#) [4]:

- Scaling up action for the prevention and control of NCDs;

- Financing for the prevention and control of NCDs;
- Promotion of multisectoral partnerships for the prevention and control of NCDs; and
- Political leadership and accountability.

Speaking on Panel 2, NCDA CEO Katie Dain emphasized that we know three defining facts about NCD financing: 1. The current level of investment in NCDs is pitiful, with less than US\$1 billion a year in development assistance for health allocated to NCDs, 2. Economies are being depleted by the direct and indirect costs of NCDs; and, 3. The return on investment in NCDs significantly outweighs the costs.

Ms Dain outlined a [five-point agenda on financing for NCDs](#) [5] for consideration in the outcome of the HLM:

- Provide leadership from the very top
- Generate more and better data on resource flows
- Implement fiscal policies for health
- Provide catalytic development assistance for NCDs
- Leverage existing and new financing mechanisms for NCDs.

"We have had enough. Enough of your lack of urgency. Enough of your pitiful investments. Enough of your shirking responsibility. You need be on the money to bend the curve on NCDs. And that means grasping the opportunity of the HLM, and going beyond the generic language previously agreed on financing to make concrete, tangible commitments." – NCDA CEO Katie Dain

Panellists in other segments of the hearing highlighted how political leaders can take the helm of the NCD response; action on diabetes as an example of delivering integrated, affordable care to people living with NCDs in Sri Lanka; the links between poor mental health and exposure to NCDs and their risk factors; and the benefits of action on NCDs at the city level.

Food and beverage industry interference

Other panellists discussed the need to address the commercial and environmental determinants of health, with particular attention to the food and beverage industries as they are taking their cues from the tobacco industry to derail ambitious and effective public health measures. Speakers also emphasized that the WHO Best Buys and other cost-effective recommended interventions are proven to save lives and improve the health and well-being of all, and urged Member States to recognize these interventions in the outcome of the HLM.

"Political leaders should lead – including behavioural change for families, individuals and communities to guarantee early detection, treatment, and management. You cannot lead without being held accountable for results." –H.E. Mr Festus Gontebanye Mogae, former President of Botswana

The NCD Alliance, together with WHO and supported by the WHO Civil Society Working Group on NCDs, convened a side event during lunchtime entitled Accelerating Action for NCDs: The Role of Civil Society in Ensuring a People-Centred Approach.

The event, moderated by James Chau, focused on sharing civil society perspectives and work in advancing the NCD response, clearly outlining the imperative for governments to work with civil society and people living with and at risk of NCDs at all levels of the national NCD response.

Organizations that attended the interactive hearing but were unable to deliver their statements or remarks can email them to gcmncd@who.int [6] to be published on the WHO's website.

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[1] <https://enoughncds.com/james-chau-hearing-speech/>

[2] <https://www.un.org/pga/72/event-latest/prevention-of-non-communicable-diseases/>

[3] http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/72/274

[4] <https://www.un.org/pga/72/wp-content/uploads/sites/51/2018/04/Interactive-Hearing-NCDs-Programme.pdf>

[5] <https://ncdalliance.org/news-events/news/enough-of-pitiful-investments-katie-dain%E2%80%99s-message-to-governments-on-financing-for-ncds>

[6] <mailto:gcmncd@who.int>

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

[8] <https://old.ncdalliance.org/resources/faq-2018-united-nations-high-level-meeting-on-ncds>

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