



Malaysia

Permanent Mission to the United Nations

(Please check against delivery)

**STATEMENT BY THE HONOURABLE MR. LIOW TIONG LAI, MINISTER OF HEALTH,
MALAYSIA TO THE HIGH-LEVEL MEETING OF THE 66TH SESSION OF THE UNITED
NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY ON THE PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF NON-
COMMUNICABLE DISEASES, NEW YORK, 19 SEPTEMBER 2011**

Mr. President,
Secretary General,
Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen.

In our pursuit of economic development, we should not lose sight of the health of the nation. Despite strong evidence of an ever increasing burden of NCD worldwide our response has not been proportionate.

2. Malaysia is extremely encouraged by WHO's leadership in pushing forward the NCD agenda. Our meeting today set an important milestone in our global effort to strengthen NCD prevention and control.

3. Malaysia has already implemented the "National Strategic Plan for Non-Communicable Diseases", also known as NSP-NCD, since December 2010. In support of the "whole of government" approach as documented in this NSP-NCD, a "Cabinet Committee for a Health Promoting Environment" comprising of ten (10) ministries and chaired by the Honorable Deputy Prime Minister, was formed. Malaysia sees this committee as a very important vehicle to push the policy and regulatory intervention agenda forward as this is mainly under the responsibility of ministries other than the Ministry of Health. We already had our first meeting on 4th April 2011 and the outcome was a commitment with the Ministry of Education to further improve screening and interventions for obesity in schools.

4. The commitments on the prevention and control of NCD that the heads of states will make tomorrow will be a strong advocacy tool that will be used in Malaysia to gather the support of all related ministries and agencies to move the NCD agenda forward. Learning from the lessons of HIV/AIDS on the strong and positive role of NGO's, we will use our Malaysian Health Promotion Board to further develop and increase the capacity of related NGO's to play a more pro-active role, particularly in community-based NCD risk factor interventions. Lessons learnt from global and national infectious disease outbreaks include having a preparedness plan, the need for cooperation and sharing of information between countries and global agencies; as well as utilising institutional memory to adapt and modify the methods we have used so successfully.

5. World leaders must act immediately and responsibly to deliver key changes in the political declaration that will be agreed upon at the conclusion of this meeting. To this end, I agree wholeheartedly with Dr Margaret Chan who once said, “What gets measured gets done”. It is important to set clear, measurable and time-bound targets and we propose that the indicators presented by the WHO at the WHO Global Forum and the First Global Ministerial Conference on Healthy Lifestyles and Non-Communicable Disease Control in Moscow in April 2011 to be incorporated into the Political Declaration.

6. The UN Declaration on HIV/AIDS in June also endorsed the use of important flexibilities guaranteed by the WTO TRIPS Agreement to ensure trade does not violate patient’s rights. While the promotion of international trade is important especially within a rules-based trading system, the WTO should provide flexibilities particularly to developing countries. Malaysia does not want the introduction of new generic drugs to be obstructed and delayed because of conflicting interpretation related to national legislation and regulations on TRIPS by various parties.

7. With the increasing prevalence of patients with NCDs, many countries are faced with a huge challenge in providing sufficient access to essential medicines for the management of these NCDs. In Malaysia, where comprehensive care is provided to her people, the use of generic drugs optimises financial resources and ensure all cases detected are treated. Malaysia will continue to strengthen the components of her health systems by building awareness and empowering the people to come forward for screening. Individuals identified will be given early intervention to prevent disease and its complications. Although screening will incur extra health expenditure, this will be more cost effective than treating the disease later with complications. And this is supported by WHO’s statement that a 10% increase in NCD will result in annual economic growth fall of 0.5%.

8. Malaysia is committed at home and will show her commitment on this global stage in forging a framework from our collective agreement against NCD.

Thank you.