

“Friends of the Task Force” to be established at the next session of the UN General Assembly

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A side event hosted by the WHO and the Russian Federation, *“Reflecting the NCD-related SDG targets for 2030 in national SDG responses: Leaving No One Behind”* was held during the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, that took place in New York from 11-20 July 2016. The side event highlighted the work of the UN Interagency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of NCDs.

Mr Dmitry Kostennikov, Deputy Minister of Healthcare of the Russian Federation highlighted the effectiveness of the Task Force and announced plans to convene a round table of countries “Friends of the Task Force” on 22 September 2016 at the 71st session of the UN General Assembly in New York. Mr Kostennikov also highlighted the 2016 UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) resolution that expanded the scope of work of the Task Force on NCDs to reflect all NCD-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals in their work in countries.

Mr Sili Epa Tuioti, the Samoan Minister of Finance, highlighted that 75% of deaths in the Pacific are from NCDs. “Political leaders must take proactive action in NCDs now”, he said. “Costs from the treatment and deaths caused by NCDs are preventable, but currently the lack of investment in NCDs is obstructing the progress” he added.

Dr Rajitha Senaratne, Minister of Health and Indigenous Medicine of Sri Lanka thanked the Task Force for their recent mission to Sri Lanka and reported that “recommendations (by the Task Force) were very useful and well accepted in Sri Lanka. The country has implemented a multisectoral action plan on NCDs with the support of the UN collaboration. Sri Lanka now has a national steering committee in place that promotes healthy lifestyles, and has implemented measures on smoking and sugar in collaboration with the WHO South East Asian Regional Office.”

Dr Alexey Kulikov from the WHO Task Force Secretariat provided an update on the work of the Task Force, highlighting the cross-cutting nature of the SDGs and the unique role of the Task Force in uniting sectors together to respond to NCDs and broader development efforts. Laura Laski from UNFPA described the importance of all UN agencies working together to prevent and control NCDs.

Other speakers included Dr Oleg Chestnov, WHO Assistant Director-General for NCDs and Mental Health, Dr Nata Menabde, Executive Director of WHO’s Office at the United Nations and Sir George Alleyne from the NCD Alliance.