



GROUP OF FIFTEEN
The Summit Level Group of Developing Countries

Distribution: General

G-15 Joint Statement
To the Sixty-Seventh World Health Assembly
(Geneva, 19-24 May 2014)

1. I have the honour to deliver this statement on behalf of the Group of 15, a summit-level group of developing countries comprising 17 member states¹. The Group is established on the firm belief that there lies a considerable potential for mutually beneficial cooperation and collaboration among developing countries for sustainable development and economic progress.
2. The theme of the World Health Assembly this year is timely. Climate change is perhaps the greatest challenge the world faces today, with impacts on environment, social and economic spheres, which makes it in essence a development issue with sustainability at its core, demanding all to act as one.
3. Climate Change has become a leading factor adversely impacting the health system globally. The international community should unite to advocate and implement policies to cope with climate change including by preventing, mitigating and adapting to its impacts on human health. Such policies are an essential element for ensuring the sustainable development of countries while creating healthy societies. We must recognize that local and regional conditions and vulnerabilities, especially of developing countries, should be highlighted in approaches to addressing the health impacts of climate change for all.
4. While we support the leadership role of the WHO as the directing and coordinating authority on international health work, in order to deal with complex and interconnected health and environmental problems related to climate change, we call upon for further cooperation with a broader range of stakeholders, including UN agencies, funds and programmes such as the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) and other relevant intergovernmental organizations and, as appropriate, relevant non-state actors. Additional resources for these efforts must be made available to assist WHO in its approach

¹ Algeria, Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Iran, Jamaica, Kenya, Malaysia, Mexico, Nigeria, Senegal, Sri Lanka, Venezuela, Zimbabwe

to climate change effects on health with the emerging priorities in the context of climate change.

5. Sound science- and evidence-based public health is a fundamental requirement for socio-economic progress and stability and a sine qua non for the general welfare of our populations. Accounting for 3 of the 8 MDGs, health indicators are a central plank of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). While much progress has been achieved in these global priorities, evidence shows that meeting the proposed targets and goals, especially in these health indicators, may pose great challenges for many. Therefore, the international community must continue efforts to accelerate progress in the health-related MDGs within and among countries. Collective, multi-stakeholder global action is needed to respond to global health challenges, to consolidate our gains, reduce inequalities, and build strong global partnerships while at the same time ensuring inclusivity, transparency and accountability.
6. In promoting and improving global health, much remains to be done, but looking forward it will be critical to build on ongoing and unfinished work. Therefore, it is important that the efforts promoted in regard to current health-related MDGs are maintained in the Post-2015 Development Agenda, building upon and reinforcing the unique features and levels of commitment highlighted in the Millennium Summit and the Monterrey Consensus. Diseases that primarily affect the poor must also remain central in the post-2015 development discourse. As health and development are inextricably linked, health continues to serve as a means of measuring success across the development agenda.
7. In this regard, we strongly believe that there is a need to strengthen the global partnership for development with an inclusive and people-centered development agenda to reinforce the international community commitments to poverty eradication and sustainable development, while taking into account that challenges in global health still remain and demand persistent attention.
8. There is an increase in burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs), such as diabetes, heart diseases, and cancer. This constitutes a major challenge for national, regional and global development, as NCDs are reported to cause over 60% of deaths worldwide. The burden of NCDs in developing countries has increased, particularly with the global increase in ageing populations, affecting the low- and middle-income countries the most. If this trend continues unabated, the burden of NCDs is expected to rise globally by 17% in the next ten years, and will continue to take a heavy toll on poverty reduction and economic development.
9. Effectively addressing preventable diseases, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, influenza, polio and other communicable diseases including

neglected tropical diseases remain a serious global concern and redoubling of efforts is required to tackle these threats especially in developing countries and in particular on child and maternal health. We urge that the productive multilateral, regional and bilateral efforts in combatting such diseases should be sustained and strengthened, as additional resources and actions are still needed to achieve the full impact of scaled-up prevention, treatment and palliative care programmes in a life-cycle approach. The Group reiterates the need for appropriate international policy space to facilitate equitable access to and availability of affordable, quality, safe medicines, vaccines and advanced medical technologies for combatting these diseases.

10. The Group also calls for full use of flexibilities available under the WTO TRIPS Agreement, including the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health and the WTO decision of 30 August 2003, to assist developing countries in better serving their public health needs and ensuring access for new medicines at affordable prices.

11. The Group notes with concern the spread of hepatitis C, a chronic infection that affects an estimated 130 million to 150 million people and results in 350 000 to 500 000 deaths a year. The Group urges WHO to include hepatitis C drugs in their Pre-qualification Programme. It also calls upon WHO to work closely with the Global Fund and UNITAID to include hepatitis B and C treatment and care, in their funding priorities.

12. Universal health coverage remains the key challenge for developing countries. We recall that Rio+20 recognized the importance of universal health coverage. Universal health coverage, understood through a continuum of care approach, has a direct bearing on a population's health through their life cycle. It is a vital component of sustainable and equitable development and poverty reduction. Factors such as equitable access to quality basic health services, health promotion, prevention, treatment, palliation and financial risk protection are required for universal health coverage to be truly universal. To meet the goal of health for all, everyone should have access to, safe, affordable, quality-assured effective medicine throughout their life without having to undergo serious financial difficulties when using them.

13. The Group underscores the importance of South-South, North-South, triangular and other regional cooperation for promoting and creating an enabling environment, strengthening institutional capacities for research and development and facilitating multi-sectoral action for the development of health policies and capacities. Such action should have the wellbeing of people at heart and not be marred by individual political agenda.

14. The Group acknowledges the value and importance of traditional medicine and need of experience and knowledge-sharing for securing public health needs. We urge for cooperation amongst all countries through visits of experts, organization of symposia to encourage the use of traditional medicine, in all spheres of health.
15. The Group emphasizes the importance and need of technology transfer as a means to empower developing countries. In this context, we underline the important role of generic medicines in the realization of the right to health.
16. We also emphasize to address the specific needs of developing countries and LDCs to develop the capacity to undertake various health initiatives, including access to all medicines and vaccines.
17. In closing, we wish to place on record our deep appreciation to Dr. Chan for her commitment and untiring efforts in carrying the global health agenda forward and express our unstinted support to her endeavours.
