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Swiss Confederation

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High-level Meeting on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases

Swiss Statement

presented by
H. E. Mrs. Micheline Calmy-Rey
President of the Swiss Confederation

Permanent Mission of Switzerland
to the United Nations

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Mr. President,

Non-communicable diseases have become not just an urgent public health problem, but also a major political issue because of their impact on our societies and economies. Indeed, these diseases pose a global challenge that concerns us all, whether in developing, emerging or developed countries, and that we must tackle together. As the specialized agency of the United Nations responsible for health worldwide, the World Health Organization has a key role to play in coordinating global measures to combat non-communicable diseases.

Since the main causes of non-communicable diseases are linked to lifestyles and living conditions, a substantial proportion of the premature deaths they cause could be avoided. These factors are vital in determining the actions we must take to confront this scourge.

In Switzerland, we have adopted a pre-emptive approach which involves targeted preventive and health-promotion measures in the fight against smoking and alcohol abuse, and promoting balanced nutrition and exercise. We have developed mechanisms that enable us to work closely and innovatively with the private sector, research and development, and civil society, together with the involvement of various public authorities in order to better direct our activities towards the populations at risk.

In the context of our development cooperation activities, we adopt a similar approach by placing the emphasis on strengthening healthcare systems and on promotion, prevention, education and social protection. We intend to step up our efforts in the area of non-communicable diseases but without taking resources away from the important area of communicable diseases. On the contrary, we must find synergies between these two areas.

Mr. President,

Above all, we need to bring about a change in mindsets, which is a long-term task that will require sustained political commitment. There is an urgent need to act and to commit ourselves to the long haul so that preventive measures can take effect before the consequences of non-communicable diseases catch up with us all. Let us devise innovative solutions that make use of the potential synergies between governmental actors, civil society, the private sector, R&D and the international organizations. We must make sure that our prevention and health-promotion measures will benefit everyone, rich or poor, in all countries. Let us use the World Health Organization and benefit from its ongoing reform process in giving it the responsibility for coordinating our response to non-communicable diseases.

Thank you for your attention.