The World Self-Medication Industry (WSMI) appreciates the opportunity to respond to the call for comments on the Member State-led draft outcome document for the WHO Global Conference on NCDs, Montevideo, Uruguay, October 2017 and would like to submit the following as its contribution to the public web-based consultation.

**About Self-Care**

Self-care contributes significantly to better health and more sustainable healthcare systems. Empowering individuals to manage their own health will become increasingly important in the years to come. Indeed, better self-care will be essential in preventing the coming global epidemic of chronic non-communicable diseases.

Worldwide, self-medication with nonprescription medicines has a history of use spanning more than a century. Self-care through responsible self-medication allows people to treat common conditions like headache, indigestion, colds and flu, allergy by themselves without the need for medical supervision.

Increasing the number of nonprescription medicines and encouraging self-care will help governments ease the pressure on public healthcare, allowing people to treat more of their everyday health conditions with no additional cost to the taxpayer.

Independent surveys from across the globe provide important insights into how consumers have been evaluating and using nonprescription medicines over the past 20 years and how their perception of self-care is changing.

The surveys reveal the following about nonprescription medicines:

- They are needed to treat common health problems.
- People trust them.
- People use them appropriately, carefully and safely.
- People appreciate their wide availability.

Many people consider nonprescription medicines to be as effective as prescription medicines and they are right to do so as more of them have been reclassified from prescription to nonprescription status and are identical to the products doctors would prescribe.
Wider access means people can treat not only self-recognizable conditions like headache but also conditions that need an initial diagnosis and additional information. Conditions like migraine are now suitable for self-care as medicines originally available only on prescription have been reclassified to nonprescription status.

Nonprescription medicines can allow healthcare professionals to spend more of their time and attention on patients that require more care. At the same time, pharmacists and other healthcare professionals can draw on their clinical knowledge to help consumers in the area of self-care and self-medication.

Pharmacovigilance systems for nonprescription medicines are similar to those for new medicines and ensure that safety is constantly monitored and action taken should problems arise.

In both developed and developing countries populations are growing older and healthcare costs have continued to escalate. Even affluent societies can no longer afford to meet the unlimited demands that an ageing population brings.

The need for accessible and affordable healthcare solutions is more important than ever. Unless more people can care for their own ailments and take measures to prevent chronic diseases health systems will simply be unable to cope.

A new, research paper demonstrating the value of self-care and self-medication to healthcare systems is expected to be published before the end of 2017. This report, supported by WSMI, confirms that the use of nonprescription medicines and reclassification of appropriate prescription drugs to nonprescription status cuts costs for people and helps healthcare systems meet patient needs.

The study shows:

- the use of nonprescription products results in overall cost savings to the health systems
- reduction in work impairment through access to nonprescription medicines
- reduced or avoided healthcare resource utilization, such as physician visits
- freeing up of physician time for patients needing more attention
- a significant cost-benefit associated with more medications having nonprescription status (e.g. triptans and statins)

At this time, many organisations are examining different models for improving healthcare systems wider access to nonprescription medicines as a fundamental part of health care in many countries and could play an even more important role worldwide.
Self-Care and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)

The graph lists a number of conditions, acute and chronic, minor and severe, appropriate for prevention and treatment by self-care and responsible self-medication.

Disease / Indication Map (AESGP study for DG Sanco, 2002)

As an example, according to the UK Department of Health, “supporting self-care is essential [...] in order to produce better health outcomes, slow disease progression, ensure better management of the sudden deteriorations often associated with long term conditions and result in improved quality of life for people. For people with long term conditions, self-care and self-management have become increasingly important in improving well-being, maintaining independence and quality of life.”

The 2014 NHS Five Year Forward View sets out a central ambition for the NHS to become better at helping people to manage their own health --. To meet this commitment, NHS England has established the Self-Care Support programme to scale-up support for people living with long-term conditions (LTCs) to manage their own health and wellbeing, empower them to make decisions about their health and care whilst delivering financial benefit to the wider healthcare system.
Smoking cessation
Tobacco smoking is one of the leading causes of death throughout the world, accounting for approximately 5.4 million deaths per year currently and for a predicted 8 million deaths per year within 20 years. Quit rates vary yet only just over one-third (37%) of smokers have ever used the nonprescription medicine NRT (Nicotine Replacement Therapy). Most countries are today party to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) which supports commitment to demand reduction measures including facilitating access for pharmaceutical treatment of tobacco dependence. Article 14 of the WHO FCTC requires parties to implement measures for the management and treatment of tobacco dependence, including pharmaceutical products such as NRT.

Ready accessibility of NRT is critical. There is strong, consistent evidence that use of NRT increases the rate of success in quitting smoking and is cost–effective. The Cochrane Library contains systematic reviews conducted since 1994 on the effectiveness of NRT for the general population. The seventh update was released in 2008 and concluded that all commercially available forms of NRT can increase people’s chances of stopping smoking. Thanks to the nonprescription availability of NRT, the use of the medicines increased by 152% in the first year after the prescription to nonprescription switch. That translated into an estimated 114,000 to 300,000 new former smokers annually in the US alone. Switching NRT products for use in smoking cessation in Australia resulted in an estimated 68,750 premature deaths being prevented in the 10 years NRT has been available as a nonprescription medicine in Australia.

Obesity and weight management
Weight management is an area that was added more recently to the self-medication arena. Being overweight or obese increases the risk for hypertension, coronary heart disease, diabetes and premature death.

The switch in several countries of orlistat for use when combined with a modified diet has filled an important weight management gap. In Australia and New Zealand, orlistat is available without a prescription, but with the proviso that consumers should receive counseling. Orlistat is now also available as a nonprescription medicine in China, the Philippines, Singapore and the US. In 2009, orlistat was approved as the first ever centralized switch in Europe by the European Medicines Agency to help tackle the increasing prevalence of heart disease, making it the first licensed weight loss aid available without prescription throughout Europe. NOTE: References available upon request.

WSMI thanks WHO for the opportunity to submit these comments. WSMI would appreciate if they could be considered during the informal Member State consultation on 29 August 2017.