Statement by
H.E. Dr. Gholamhossein Dehghani
Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs

At
Third United Nations High-level Meeting on NCDs

New York - 27 September 2018
In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Honorable Chairman, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is an honor for me to represent the Islamic Republic of Iran in this United Nations high level meeting on NCDs where the national and global progress in prevention and control of non-communicable diseases is being reviewed. We are grateful to WHO for well-organized preparation for this important event.

I am pleased to inform you that the Islamic Republic of Iran has taken comprehensive multi-sectoral steps for implementation of WHO voluntary global NCDs targets. Following regional and international consultations supported by WHO, Iran’s national action plan for prevention and control of NCDs was developed and introduced during the official visit by then WHO’s Director General in 2015. It was later on approved by the Supreme Council for Health and Food Security, under the patronage of President Rouhani, in February 2016.

In addition to WHO’s nine voluntary targets, the national action plan has also adopted the following four specific targets:

- **Target 10**: Zero trans fatty acid in food & oily products;
- **Target 11**: 20% relative reduction in mortality rate due to traffic injuries;
- **Target 12**: 10% relative reduction in mortality rate due to drug abuse;
- **Target 13**: 20% increase in access to treatment for mental diseases.

Excellencies
To accommodate structural and governance requirements to fulfill the targets, the NCDs National Committee (INCDC), headed by the Minister of Health and Medical Education and attended by a high level managerial team from nation-wide health system was established which developed national and provincial plans for early detection, management, monitoring and reducing the burden of NCDs and risk factors. There are seven time-bound and mandated committees within the INCDC, with the contributions from different sectors and industries, taking advantage also from our strong and extensive PHC network across the Country. The performance of INCDC has been recognized globally and the first UN Inter-Agency Task Force (UNIATF) Award in appreciation of its outstanding contribution to achieving NCD-related Sustainable Development Goals was granted today.

In 2016, our Ministry of Health & Medical Education established the Division for Social Affairs with an aim to boost social mobilization, enhance citizen accountability, integrate social determinants of health into healthcare delivery system, and foster multi-sectoral collaboration, all towards reducing the burden of NCDs. The Ministry has signed 14 bilateral agreements with other sectors to address various dimensions of NCDs.

With the support of President Rouhani, a comprehensive Health Transformation Plan (HTP), a step towards universal health coverage (UHC), was launched in 2014. Since then, several reforms have been adopted within primary and secondary care systems to address NCDs and overcome the related challenges towards sustainable health development in Iran.

Mr. Chairman,

As we approach the 40th anniversary of Alma-Ata Declaration on Primary Health Care (PHC), we are proud to announce that we have already strengthened our comprehensive PHC network, led by community healthcare
workers called Behvarze (بھورز)، into urban settings, benefitting from a vast Family Physician programme and a transformed Electronic Health Record, to address NCDs and relevant risk factors.

Our unique health governance system, where medical education has been merged into health services within the Ministry of Health and Medical Education, has created a functional mechanism for cost-effective and in-house training of service providers who are able to conduct world-class biomedical research on NCDs, including National and Sub-national Burden of Diseases studies and timely national NCDs surveillance mechanisms.

All the achievements mentioned led WHO to select Iran in 2017 as a fast track country for prevention and control of NCDs.

Ladies and Gentlemen

NCDs are complex, multidimensional and expensive to tackle. The only way to overcome this big challenge faced by human beings is effective and timely prevention, where there is no other way than enhancing social accountability and meaningful multi-sectoral collaboration to increase citizens’ literacy thereby promoting healthy lifestyle. Addressing NCDs needs accurate data, feasible action plans customized for each setting, utilizing appropriate technologies, tailored social mobilization and, above all, high political commitment. Disasters, either natural or manmade, including climate change, air pollution and conflicts will hamper activities to prevent and control NCDs and will result in loss of lives and disruption in realization of sustainable development by countries.

To conclude, let me emphasize here that in realization of the envisaged NCDs-related national and global goals and targets, international community, WHO and system-wide United Nations should assist national governments and
regional organizations in prevention and control’s attempts and measures. It should also be guaranteed that countries shall not be deprived of or denied from any facility, technology or resources through application of any kind of economic sanctions, particularly unilateral and unlawful ones.

I thank you for your attention.