Your Excellencies,

Non-commercial partnership “Equal Right to Life” thanks the Secretariat of the UN General Assembly for the opportunity to participate in an open expert discussion of the Draft Political declaration for the HLM on Noncommunicable diseases.

“Equal Right to Life” is a non-government All-Russian oncological social programme launched by the country’s leading oncologists to inform and involve the entire spectrum of the Russian society into developing solutions for issues related to prevention, early detection and treatment of oncological diseases. Fostering collaborative efforts of governments, scientific community and civil society remains our equally important priority.

“Equal Right to Life” is one of the few Russian medical organizations with ECOSOC consultative status. We participated in the discussion of the Draft report and recommendations to combat NCDs “Time to Deliver” that was conducted by the WHO Independent High-Level Commission on NCDs. We also registered to participate in civil society hearings to discuss the Draft Political declaration on NCDs to take place on July 5, 2018 in NYC. Due to USA visa difficulties, we will not be able to be there in person. Therefore, with this letter we would like to share our position regarding the Draft Political declaration and contribute to the civil society dialogue.

We fully support the Draft Political declaration to beat NCDs on the need to accelerate the efforts of governments and non-state actors targeted at finding and implementing effective mechanism against NCDs. This approach will allow accelerating progress towards achieving the global sustainable development goal number 3.

Resolution A/RES/70/1 “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development” adopted by the General Assembly on September 25, 2015 captures firm commitment of the Heads of States to combat NCDs, including cancer, and their 2030 target to reduce by one third premature mortality from NCDs (target 3.4, SDG 3) through prevention and treatment, universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines. The Member-States’ intention to reduce, by 2030, premature mortality from NCDs by one third is reinforced by the World health Assembly resolution WHA 70.12 “Cancer prevention and control in the context of an integrated approach”.

Russia’s 2030 long-term socio-economic development forecast attributes the measures to reduce premature mortality from cancer to the top three major steps to reduce the overall mortality at the national level, while the other two measures include effective and accessible medical assistance and prevention of social diseases. The Russian Government and the scientific community are currently developing a comprehensive set of measures to combat NCDs in the aspect of oncological diseases, namely a National strategy to combat oncological diseases for the period by 2030. The draft Document aims at developing and executing a comprehensive set of cancer prevention and treatment state policy measures designed to reduce the overall mortality from cancer diseases, specifically targeting
premature mortality of employable population, as well as the prevention and reduction of cancer related mortality and disability rates achieved through early detection. The Document envisages targets to increase accessibility and quality of medical assistance, including pharmacological support, technologically advanced specialized medical assistance, rehabilitation and palliative medical support with the goal to preserve the labor force and to strengthen the human capital in the long-term perspective.

Given that priority setting is a key success factor to achieve SDG 3.4, the Draft Political declaration contains recommendations to improve the process of priority setting between the overall NCD and mental health problematics. At the same time, the set of priorities in the area of combating the oncological diseases is rather small and needs extension. Therefore, we suggest amending point OP13 of the Draft Political declaration in the following way: “Strengthen and reorient health systems including services for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases and mental health, as part of universal health coverage, including access to safe, affordable, effective and quality essential medicines and technologies; introduction of screening programs for early detection of oncological diseases by the main types of oncological malignant tumors”.

We also draw your attention to the fact that the Draft Political declaration lacks a call to the Member States for foster innovation in the industries that relate to NCDs risk factors. This is important given the need to elaborate new, breakthrough approaches to curb the NCD burden that is highlighted in many WHO framework documents, including the Report by the WHO Independent High-Level Commission on NCDs “Time to deliver”.

We ask you to consider the position of our organization and insert the following amendments into the text of the Draft Political declaration. In point OP18 it is necessary to focus on innovation potential in the area of NCD prevention: “f) actualization of legislative solutions aimed at NCD prevention, including regulation of potentially carcinogenic consumer goods, food products with high levels of salt, sugar and trans fats, while increasing the opportunities for and mandating positive contributions from the private sector, including the industries that mostly affect NCDs to reach SDG 3.4 in the aspect of scaling up information campaigns stimulating consumer shifting to alternative products with lower levels of carcinogens, salt, sugar and trans fats, securing availability and consumer access to these reduced harm products.”

This will allow addressing the role of primary prevention of NCDs, implemented by legislative mechanisms of regulating the manufacture and consumption of harmful products, as well as information campaigns aimed at reduction of consumption of potentially carcinogenic products and products high in sugar, salt and fat contents.

Given all the above, we kindly ask you to support our efforts and deliver the position of “Equal Right to Life” organization in combating the NCDs on the fields of the UN GA.

Best regards,

Dmitry Borisov,
Head of “Equal Right to Life”