STATEMENT

President of the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly

H.E. Miroslav Lajčák

CLOSING: Interactive hearing in preparation of the high-level meeting on non-communicable diseases

Trusteeship Council Chamber

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Remarks

Excellencies, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you, again, for participating in this interactive hearing.

I will only speak for a few minutes. And so, I will not attempt to summarise what was said today. The discussions were too complex, and too diverse, for that.

But I will point out a few things, which stuck with me.

First: the scale of this challenge.

A lot of data and analysis came up in our discussions today.

We heard that:

- We may lose 120 million lives prematurely by 2025
- NCDs produce annual GDP losses of between 3.5 and 5.9%
- And most countries do not allocate enough of their budgets to health – we committed to 15%; most have only reached 7%, and in low income countries, it’s less than 5%!
• And we heard that without urgent action, tobacco could kill a billion people in this century.

These numbers are not easy to listen to. But that is exactly what we need to do.

Because that is the only way we can understand the scale and complexities of the challenges posed by NCDs.

And that is the only way we can make sure that we can rise, to meet them.

**The second main takeaway is that action is happening, on the ground.**

There are efforts underway to prevent and combat NCDs – and to reverse the worrying trends that we are seeing.

Many of you pointed to the best practices that have been seen at the national-level.

*For example, Colombia’s bold decision to triple the tax on tobacco was said to result in a 15% drop in use and a 46% increase in revenue. Or, Jamaica where there is a new programme to remove sugar-sweetened beverages from schools.*

Many initiatives involve a variety of bodies and actors. And, they show that a “whole-of-society approach” is more than a phrase – actually, it is a reality, in many places, on the ground.
So, in a way, I think this hearing has acted as a source of hope. It shows that action *can* be taken, to change the reality of NCDs.

But the problem remains: there is not enough of it.

There are still major gaps – particularly when it comes to investment.

*And that was a third takeaway from today’s hearing.*

Simply put: we are just not dedicating enough resources to preventing and controlling NCDs.

And, this is coming back to bite us.

As our discussions showed, the economic burden of NCDs is staggering. This is particularly acute, for middle or lower-income countries.

That is why we heard the case for a scale-up of investment being made, loud and clear, today.

We heard that it is better for people – and it is better for budgets.

*As we heard, every dollar invested in NCDs yields seven dollars in returns.*

In the words of Katie Dain, “invest now, save later”.

But, we cannot just sit back, and wait for this realisation to sink in. And this, for me, was takeaway number **four**.

We have already made a very concrete commitment. In signing up to target 3.4 of the 2030 Agenda, we promised to reduce premature deaths by **one third**.

As we have seen, however, a commitment is not enough. Because, we will not meet that target – at our current pace.

So, we need to do more.

We need detailed plans….specific priorities….prioritisation of best-buy initiatives…And to make this happen, the first ingredient is firm political will.

**And, the fifth and final takeaway relates to people.**

Today we saw the human face of NCDs.

*We heard over and over about how inequality affects outcomes for people. Whether it is income or social inequality; gender or age; or even just a matter of where you live. Inequality means the difference between life and death; between suffering and a healthy life. The many survivors who spoke today made this clear.*
Yes, we need to analyse the data. Yes, we need to talk about policies and programmes. And yes, we need to delve into technicalities.

But, among this, we cannot forget that we are talking about real people.

It is people who will suffer, if we do nothing, and let these trends continue.

And it is people whose lives could be saved by our actions.

**Conclusion**

*So, excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,*

I think we now have a clearer vision, of what this High-Level Meeting, on 27 September, can achieve.

And, we achieved a lot today.

Stories were shared. Questions were asked. Calls to action were made.

But if we want this High-Level Meeting to mark a turning point, we all need to do even more.

Member States must now agree a strong, action-oriented political declaration. But it cannot stop there. As James Chau highlighted this morning, **we all have a part to play.**
So, let us keep doing our part, in the fight against NCDs.

Let us keep up the pressure – let us mobilise those around us – let us raise our voices even louder.

Let us give this high-level meeting the best chance possible, to change the course of history, for NCDs.

*Thank you.*