Statement by the International Council of Women (ICW-CIF)
Interactive Hearing for the UN High Level Meeting on NCDs
5 July 2018

Dear distinguished members and colleagues, I am Dr. Elizabeth Carll, UN Representative and Focal Point for Health/Mental Health and NCDs of the International Council of Women, the oldest women’s rights organization established in 1888 with National Councils in 64 Countries, We also work in collaboration with several other NGOs including CCCUN and the NGO Committee on Mental Health Working Group on NCDs.

Addressing crosscutting risk factors is essential to the prevention and control of Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) and the foundation for sustainable health services and policies. Therefore, it is essential to address the three main cross-cutting human factors for NCDs: gender, age, and mental health and neurological conditions. Gender as women’s and men’s healthcare requires addressing the differences relating to NCDs. Age as a factor, as it important to address NCDs across the life course recognizing children’s and adolescent health needs as well as older adults, as NCDs increase in older adults. Data collection for measuring meaningful progress must be disaggregated along these three factors.

In addition, mental health conditions play a significant cross-cutting role, as they are both precursors and consequences of NCDs. Mental health and neurological conditions are unique as they are also an NCD itself, as demonstrated by WHO’s projection that depression will be the number one burden of disease worldwide by 2030, surpassing cardiovascular disease, cancer, diabetes, and respiratory illnesses. Mental health conditions have sometimes been referred to as the 5th NCD.

Finally, the importance of mental health and neurological conditions, have been recognized by member states in the outcome document of the 2014 UN High Level Review on NCDs and the need to provide equitable access to effective programs and interventions for all, as described in the WHO Mental Health Action Plan 2013-2020. Therefore, the integration and implementation of the WHO Mental Health Action Plan into NCD services is necessary to move forward and build upon previous commitments and can be accomplished in a cost effective manner through the integration of mental health care into community primary health care.