Infectious diseases still strike at millions in developing countries, but they are rapidly being overtaken by the epidemic of non-communicable diseases -- mainly heart diseases, stroke, cancers, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases. Every year, this epidemic causes 60 per cent of deaths globally, 69 per cent of these in developing countries and 12 per cent in economies in transition, countries that can least afford the social and economic consequences these diseases will bring. Nearly 7.2 million deaths from non-communicable diseases occur in developing countries before the age of 60 every year, and most of these premature deaths are preventable by establishing public policies in developing countries with the effective involvement of sectors outside health.

There are also new dimensions to the non-communicable disease problem in developing countries. Many developing countries are now beginning to suffer from a double burden of undernutrition and obesity. Underweight children and overweight adults are now often found in the same households. Non-communicable diseases are also linked to the burden of HIV and TB, and recent evidence suggests that a 10 per cent reduction in rate of deaths from non-communicable diseases would have a similar impact on progress towards the TB component of MDG6 as a rise in GDP corresponding to at least a decade of growth in the poorest developing countries.

Three new developments have led to this WHO panel on non-communicable diseases. The first is the endorsement of an 'Action Plan for the Global Strategy for the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases' by the World Health Assembly in May 2008. This plan has a particular focus on developing countries, as well as economies in transition. The plan comprises a set of inter-sectoral actions for Member States, international partners and WHO, which, when performed collectively -- with the effective involvement of sectors outside health -- will tackle the growing burden and socio-economic impact imposed by non-communicable diseases in developing countries.

The second development is the growing international awareness that non-communicable diseases hold back the attainment of the MDGs in developing countries, and that the continued failure of the international community to tackle non-communicable diseases in developing countries may derail other international efforts in poverty reduction.

Discussions at the 2009 ECOSOC High-level Segment (Geneva, 6-9 July 2010) drew attention of the international community to the non-communicable diseases gap in the global development agenda. Since then, a growing number of Member States have emphasized that global development initiatives must take into account the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases and that instruments such as the MDGs provide opportunities for synergy. The Caribbean Group of States recently called on the UN General Assembly to undertake action. Their call has been supported by the Commonwealth Heads of Government, who have issued a 'Statement of Commonwealth Action to Combat Non-communicable Diseases', which, inter alia, declared support for the call to integrate indicators to monitor the magnitude, trend and socio-
economic impact of NCDs into the core MDG monitoring and evaluation system, and called for a Summit on NCDs to be held in September 2011, under the auspices of the UN General Assembly.

The third development is the unequivocal evidence that there are workable public policy solutions to address non-communicable diseases in developing countries with the effective involvement of sectors like agriculture, education, food and pharmaceutical production, trade and urban development. Increasingly, public policy makers in developing countries are challenged to incorporate the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases in poverty-reduction strategies and in relevant social and economic policies.

The 43rd Session of the Commission for Population and Development (CPD), with its theme 'Health, mortality, morbidity and development', provides a timely opportunity to focus on the non-communicable disease gap in the global development agenda. To this end, WHO is organizing a side event on 13 April 2010, at the time of the 43rd session of the Commission, to focus on one of the major challenges for development in the twenty-first century.

Moderator: Japan (now confirmed)

Duration: 1:15 – 2:45 pm

The distinguished panelists will include:

- **Sir George Alleyne, Director Emeritus of WHO/Pan American Health Organization**, who will discuss the magnitude of the epidemic of NCDs in Latin America and the Caribbean specifically, as well as the increasing challenges in addressing these diseases and their socio-economic impact in developing countries.

- **Dr Carissa Etienne, Assistant Director-General, WHO**, responsible for Health Systems Strengthening. She will discuss the need to reorient and strengthen health systems in developing countries, enabling them to respond more effectively and equitably to the health-care needs of people with non-communicable diseases, in line with the WHO-developed strategy for strengthening health systems.

- **Dr Gauden Galea, Coordinator, Health Promotion, WHO**, responsible for building and disseminating information about the evidence-base on the relationship between non-communicable diseases, poverty and development in developing countries. He will highlight why non-communicable diseases are a development issue, how they are holding back the attainment of the MDGs, and what are strategic next steps to address non-communicable diseases in developing countries.

- **Dr Rachel Nugent, Interim Director for Global Health at the Center for Global Development**. She will address specifically the economic costs associated with non-communicable diseases, with emphasis on the impact at the national level.

- **Prof Jean Claude Mbanya, President of the International Diabetes Federation (IDF)**, will bring the perspectives of non-governmental organizations bodies, not only in terms of diabetes, but also the joint efforts of the World Heart Federation (WHF) and the International Union Against Cancer (UICC) in addressing NCDs.

The presentations will be followed by a Q&A period
Participants:
- Members of the Commission
- Member States
- NGOs
- Experts to the Third Committee
- UN Agencies