Your excellency, Vice Minister Wang Longde, distinguished guests.

I would first like to begin by thanking Vice Minister Wang Longde, Dr Kong Lingzhi and other colleagues at the Chinese Ministry of Health, for jointly hosting this event with the World Health Organization. I would also like to thank Dr Wang Yu and colleagues at the China CDC for their great efforts in organizing this event. My gratitude also goes to our WHO colleagues here in the China office, who all worked very hard to make this happen.

There is a ferocious global epidemic of chronic disease raging in every corner of the planet. There is not one country, not a community, and scarcely a family left untouched by heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes, or other chronic diseases.

It does not discriminate for age, gender or income. It is afflicting developed and developing countries. It is not a problem only of older people: more and more people are dying prematurely in the prime of life. It must, and can, be stopped.

The WHO report, *Preventing chronic disease: a vital investment*, was launched globally in October last year. Today, we are launching the Chinese version of the report and will present to you data focusing on the situation in China, which was one of the nine countries featured in the report.
Last year, an estimated 35 out of 58 million total global deaths were due to chronic diseases.

This means that 60% of all deaths in 2005 were chronic disease related.

The 35 million chronic disease death toll is double the number of deaths from all infectious diseases, including HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria, maternal and perinatal conditions, and nutritional deficiencies combined.

Also, out of the 35 million chronic disease deaths, 7.5 million – that is more than 1 in 5 - were from China.

Let's take a closer look at the situation in China.

When we examine all the causes of death in China, we see that almost 80% of all deaths were from chronic disease – with cardiovascular diseases such as heart disease and stroke being responsible for a third of all deaths. Cancer and chronic respiratory diseases are also major causes of mortality.

Just a note to add: the impact of diabetes is underestimated because although people may live for years with diabetes, their deaths are usually recorded as being caused by heart disease or kidney failure.

Deaths from chronic diseases are projected to increase over the next ten years. If current trends continue, statistical projections show that over the next ten years in China, more than 80 million people will die from a chronic disease.

In China alone, deaths from infectious diseases, maternal and perinatal conditions, and nutritional deficiencies combined will increase by 2 percent,
while deaths from chronic diseases will increase by 19 percent. Most markedly, deaths from diabetes will increase by 50 percent.

We must bear in mind that these alarming statistics describing the rising number of deaths related to chronic diseases are only part of the picture: each year millions of people are taken ill with these diseases and as a result are disabled, their ability to work is hampered, families are burdened with their care and the expense of treatment, often for years. And far too often, their death comes in the prime of their lives, when they perhaps are parents to growing children, earning crucially important livings, supporting extended families.

**slide 5: Sridhar Reddy**

Mr Sridhar Reddy, whom we interviewed for the report, illustrates this point well.

Mr Reddy chewed tobacco since his teenage years and drank alcohol every day for more than two decades. He had a malignant tumour removed from his right cheek and also his throat. This photo was taken during his third hospitalization, when doctors declared that the cancer had spread to Mr Reddy's lungs and liver.

Mr Reddy's wife, in addition to caring for him, replaced him as the money-maker in the family, running their restaurant. But the money earned was not enough for the hospital bills. To pay for his medical bills, Sridhar borrowed money that he worried he would never be able to repay. Sadly, Sridhar died only a short time after he was interviewed. He was 52 years old.

**slide 6: Causes of chronic disease**

The causes of Sridhar Reddy's illness and this chronic disease epidemic are well established and well known. The three most important risk factors that we can do something about are:

- unhealthy diet
- lack of adequate physical inactivity, and
As you can see these risk factors in turn cause a number of intermediate risk factors: raised blood pressure, raised glucose levels, raised cholesterol - here labelled as 'abnormal blood lipids', and overweight and obesity. In many countries, these risks are rapidly increasing.

*slide 7: Risks are increasing*

For instance, taking the risk factor of obesity and overweight: Already we are alarmed that an estimated 1 billion people are overweight or obese globally. This map shows the current state of affairs for women: red signifying where the problem is greatest, down through pink and orange where it is of significant concern.

If current overweight trends continue, it is expected that the numbers of overweight and obese people will increase in almost every country in the world, as you can see by this comparative map:

*Press space bar*

By 2015, it is estimated that over 1.5 billion people will be overweight, as against approximately one billion today.

*slide 8: Economic impact*

And that will have, and is already having, a serious impact. The burden of chronic disease:

- has major adverse effects on the quality of life of affected individuals;
- causes premature death;
- and creates large adverse – and underappreciated – economic effects on families, communities and societies in general.

Chronic diseases undermine the macroeconomic development of countries. Our report shows that many countries will forego billions in national income over the next 10 years as a result of premature deaths caused by heart
disease, stroke, and diabetes. China could forego 558 billion dollars if it does not act now.

*(slide 9: the cost of inaction)*

Without action, an estimated 388 million people will die globally from chronic diseases in the next 10 years – over 80 million of those deaths will be in China.

Perhaps most important to remember is that too many of these deaths, as we have seen illustrated by Sridhar Reddy's story, will occur prematurely, and likely after long and costly illnesses. This is having a severe impact on families, communities, and countries.

The situation requires a rapid response that must above all be forward-looking. The vision for the future should focus on reducing deaths and improving lives.

Thank you.