



Embedding prevention, the best available evidence, and conflict of interest safeguards in the political declaration of the High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage

The United Nations makes good use of its resources and political influence when it helps mobilize support for universal health coverage. Good health is a precondition for enjoying much of life, liberty, family, and community. When the first UN General Assembly High-Level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases was held in 2011, it was only the second such meeting dedicated to a health issue since the U.N. was founded in 1945. Recently, high level emphasis has put the spotlight on HIV/AIDS, Anti-Microbial Resistance, and Tuberculosis, a positive sign of the dedication to health of world leaders.

Member States should remember that so much death and illness that is treatable is also **preventable**. Member States should be diligent in ensuring that there are sufficient regulatory controls on the marketing and promotion of tobacco, alcohol, and food, especially food consumed by infants and children. It is irresponsible to be careless about the causes of illness, and over-reliant on pharmaceutical, surgical, and other expensive remedies.

Imbuing self-serving industries with key roles in designing health policy instigates cynicism in the public and risks distorting policies to suit their commercial objectives. The fortunes of pharmaceutical and medical technology companies rise with every diagnosed illness and products sold by food, tobacco, and alcohol companies contribute to high rates of many disease. The global community needs to inspire confidence in citizens and good public policy. In 2011, 2014, and 2018, statements of concern of civil society groups urged Member States to **adopt conflict of interest safeguards** and strong prevention regulations. In 2018, 49 groups and networks representing at least 1,300 civil society groups world-wide called (again) for a Political Declaration to promote:

- **measures that are based the best available evidence,**
- **using enforceable regulations, legislation, and fiscal measures to prevent disease related to food, tobacco, and alcohol, and**
- **establishing robust conflict of interest safeguards for policy development and programme delivery.**

Thus, we support the call on Member States by the Secretary General's Independent Accountability Panel to:

design and commit to a comprehensive international binding convention to tackle rising obesity and NCDs among women, children and adolescents...As with the [Framework Convention on Tobacco Control] drafting process, rent-seeking interests should be excluded from the negotiations.¹

Respectfully submitted,

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¹ United Nations Secretary-General's Independent Accountability Panel for Every Woman, Every Child, Every Adolescent (IAP), *Private Sector: Who is Accountable?* (New York: United Nations, 2018) at 8, 25, 46, 51, 54, and 64 online: <
http://iapreport.org/img/pdf/IAP18001_REPORT_B_020_WEB.pdf>.