

**Statement by WCRF International at WHO SEARO 70th Regional Committee Meeting
Agenda item 8.6: SDGs and Progress Towards Universal Health Coverage**

Thank you for the opportunity to deliver this statement on behalf of World Cancer Research Fund International, supported by the NCD Alliance and the Healthy India Alliance. We commend the progress made towards achieving UHC in the SEA Region, and for detailed monitoring. We also note with concern the growing burden of NCDs, with 8.9 million NCD deaths in the region in 2015ⁱ. In addition to care, NCD prevention is a critical component of UHC, while also mitigating the burden placed on individuals and health systems in order to make best use of resources. We commend the plans for an upcoming regional meeting on accelerating the response to NCDs. We call on governments to act in three key areas, with support from the Regional Office and respective Country Offices:

- 1. Ensure adequate and sustained financial resources for NCDs:** Significant domestic resource mobilisation is necessary to address cancer and other NCDs and to ensure access to UHC for all. As recognised in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda, taxes on unhealthy commodities that are NCD risk factors (such as tobacco, alcohol, and foods and beverages high in sugar, salt and fat) provide a win-win solution by increasing domestic revenue and decreasing consumption. Thailand levied 0.14 billion USD from tobacco taxation in 2014 aloneⁱⁱ, from a tax estimated to have saved 320,000 lives by 2026, with funds reinvested into the Thai Health Promotion Fund to additional benefit.
- 2. Integrate prevention and treatment of cancer and other NCDs into existing programmes:** Key opportunities for cancer and NCD prevention exist within reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health, as conditions and habits during pregnancy, childhood, and adolescence influence risk of NCDs in later life. Additionally, opportunities for integration exist across NCDs and infectious diseases, particularly TB and HIV, as well as nutrition. A more strategic, integrated approach will benefit the health of individuals and the whole health system.
- 3. Leverage the preparatory process for the 2018 UN HLM on NCDs:** The 2018 High-level Meeting on NCDs offers a pivotal opportunity to reinforce political commitment for NCD prevention and control, to exchange good practices and make new commitments to address bottlenecks in national NCD responses. We call on Member States to ensure representation at the level of Heads of Government and Heads of State. Participation at the highest political level is necessary, as well as across sectors with a role in NCD prevention (including agriculture, transport, education, trade and urban planning),— while guarding against interference from the tobacco, alcohol, and food and beverage industries. This will serve to improve policy coherence and thus mitigate the future burden of NCDs on individuals, health systems and economies.

Thank you for your attention.

ⁱ http://www.who.int/healthinfo/global_burden_disease/estimates/en/index1.html

ⁱⁱ http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/206007/1/9789241510424_eng.pdf