



**WHO European Ministerial Conference on the Prevention and Control
Noncommunicable Diseases in the Context of Health 2020**

**Ashgabat, Turkmenistan
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- Your Excellency Mr President, Madame First Lady of Estonia, honourable ministers, distinguished delegates and partners, ladies and gentlemen. It is an honour and privilege to be here with you in Ashgabat and to discuss with you the achievements in noncommunicable diseases prevention and control over the past years, and to declare commitment to joint action in this area in the short and long term
- It was only two years ago that Member States met in Moscow at the first global ministerial meeting on NCDs, in New York and adopted the Political Declaration on NCDs, and agreed on the European NCD Action Plan in Baku, all this against the backdrop of the development of the new European health policy, Health 2020. Health 2020 responds to the changing context in Europe, aiming to address health inequities within and between countries, the impact of globalization and new technologies, the aging population, concerns about the financial sustainability of health systems, the changing role of citizens and, importantly, the particularly alarming growth of NCDs.
- We shall, over the next two days, be reviewing the progress made since then in Europe. In particular we will see how our joint work on NCDs has led to new action plans, new insights, and new action. We will see how it is integrated with the changing economic scene, and how we need to remain vigilant if we are not to lose the gains made in this field over the last thirty years.
- For instance, the European Region faces growing differences in tobacco use between and within countries. As we end the first decade since the adoption of the Framework Convention, it is valid to think of what has been the progress and what are the next steps. Is it time to start thinking of overcoming the barriers and to move forward to a time when our children's children might enjoy a Europe that is free of tobacco? We will have a lot to say on this in the Conference, but I want to pause here for a moment and to recognise the commitment to this field that has been shown by Turkmenistan and its President in particular. We hope this conference will be a moment when the tide begins to turn against tobacco and we might have a generation, born in 2000, who might grow into adults for whom smoking is indeed rare.
- Ladies and gentlemen, now has come the time to discuss the way forward: commitments and action. We need to strengthen our governance structures and institutional capacities to accelerate action. Therefore, I am grateful to the Government of Turkmenistan for hosting this event at this point of time. The programme of the conference, and the Ashgabat

Declaration, where you all have been working on, reflect the state of the art and is visionary at the same time.

- You are at the forefront in truly committing to improvement of health for all, reducing health inequalities, and strengthen leadership and participatory governance. You will share your structures on cooperation across the whole of government and whole of society. You will share a growing fund of experiences where health systems and NCDs specialists collaborate as well as they have been doing in the past two years, to overcome barriers and create opportunities for the production of health. And you will discuss the importance of strong people-centred health systems adapted to NCDs. With this agenda, you are setting an example for the other Regions.
- With this, I want to wish us all an inspiring conference and lively discussions. Dear colleagues and friends, thank you for your kind attention.