73rd United Nations General Assembly (UNGA73):
High Level Meeting on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs)
ISN Report
INTRODUCTION

On 27 September 2018, the 73rd gathering of the United Nations General Assembly staged the 3rd High Level Meeting on the prevention and control of NCDs. The meeting aimed at reviewing and set out the commitments of global health leaders on how to tackle the global burden of non-communicable diseases (NCDs). A total of 23 Heads of State and Government and 55 Ministers of Health attended and spoke at the meeting. ISN was invited to attend the meeting in its capacity of non-state actor in official relations with the World Health Organization and was the only kidney organisation present at the meeting.

Luisa Strani (Advocacy Director) and Donal O’Donoghue (Advocacy Working Group member) attended the meeting on behalf of the ISN.

ISN MAIN ACTIVITIES

- **ISN launches of the White Paper on Circulatory Health on Tuesday 25th September.**

  ISN was one of the 4 co-organisers (together with the World Heart Federation, World Hypertension League, World Stroke Federation) of this UNGA side event, attended by key note speakers Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, Vytenis Andriukaitis and Health Minister for Jamaica, Dr. the Hon. Christopher Tufton. ISN was mentioned and thanked by speakers and participants during the event. The speakers and all stakeholders involved committed to the White Paper and delivery of its main calls to action. Kidney disease features prominently in the White Paper as a key contributor and risk factor to circulatory health.

- **ISN participates to the HLM2018 on NCDs (Panel 1 and 2)**

  ISN was the only kidney organization invited to attend the 2 panels of the High Level Meeting on NCDs which took place in the United Nations General Assembly and was led by global health ministers and heads of states, who shared strategies on how to tackle non-communicable diseases worldwide.

  The meeting took place over 8 hours and culminated in the adoption of the Political Declaration of the HLM2018. Kidney disease was mentioned by the Minister of Health of Cameroon, André Mama.
Fouda, as a key challenge which the country is tackling by providing universal health coverage to kidney disease patients.

ISN was given a chance to submit a statement to contribute to the discussions in writing which is accessible here: https://www.dropbox.com/s/kll6vr96or77lbo/HLM%202018%20on%20NCDs%20-%20draft%20statement_final.pdf?dl=0.

- Additional relevant meetings

1) The Permanent Mission of Denmark, Danish NCD Alliance, East African NCD Alliance, NCD Alliance: ‘Combatting NCDs from the village to the UN: Integration of NCD Interventions into UHC’ (Wednesday 26 September)
2) NCDs Alliance side meeting: ‘No Turning Back Seizing opportunities to invigorate and intensify the NCD response’ (Wednesday 26 September)
3) WHO, Finland, Russian Federation, Uruguay: ‘High-level Commission on NCDs: Time to Deliver: Combatting NCDs is a Political Choice’ (Thursday 27 September)
4) Global Coordination Mechanism on NCDs: “The Power of Partnerships: realizing high-level commitments to prevent and control NCDs” (Thursday 27 September)

Full programme of meetings is available here: https://www.dropbox.com/s/rj3j36dp5pr916n/HLM%202018%20Programme.docx?dl=0

MAIN OUTCOMES

ISN generally welcomes the Political Declaration and in particular the following points which are highly relevant to kidney disease management:

- The recognition by member states of the key importance of a multisectoral and integrated response to disease management
- The commitment to whole-of-society, health in all policies, equity based and life course approaches to disease care
- The mention of the need to increase access to essential medicines, vaccines and technologies
- The full endorsement for Universal Health Coverage
- The recognition of the link between environment and pollution and NCDs.

- Challenges

We regret to note that the ministers have preferred to take a non-disease specific approach in the political declaration and therefore we acknowledge a lack to mention kidney disease in the 2018 Political Declaration. As reasoning for this, officials and other stakeholders explained to us that member states have preferred to have a non-repetitive document and, as kidney disease is already mentioned in 2011 Political Declaration, their strong reaffirmation of their commitment to the 2011 Political Declaration in the second preamble of the 2018 Political Declaration is also indirectly including their acknowledgement of other diseases outside the scope of the big 4 plus mental health.

Overarchingly, however, ISN believes that the Political Declaration is still lacking true ambition in proposing action-oriented, tangible targets. Additionally, access to medicines, treatment, and care
for NCDs had low visibility in governments’ statements or in statements during the panel sessions. WHO ‘Best Buys’, WHO’s list of most cost effective interventions to address non-communicable diseases, were also largely ignored.

Rhetoric of ensuring civil society engagement and participation of people living with NCDs did not translate into action, with little or no speaking roles for civil society

Finally, the next HLM on NCDs is now due only in 2025, dangerously allowing for little action and possible procrastination.

- **Opportunities**

The NCD civil society was *mobilised and engaged*. The energy was palpable and we hope it will certainly continue. ISN is now *recognized as a key partner and stakeholder* by the NCD community engaging in global health policy.

Furthermore, ISN is building ever *stronger relations and partnerships* with other disease organisations especially the World Heart Federation, the World Hypertension League and the World Stroke Federation as shown by the joint launch of the White Paper on Circulatory Health

The HLM2018 was certainly a valuable opportunity for ISN to *be visible and share the concerns* of the kidney community with key stakeholders such as the EU Commissioner for Health, several Ministers (especially Cameroon, Jamaica and Uruguay), other key stakeholders from the NCDs community such as the NCDs Alliance, *Ms Zoleka Mandela*, patient and health advocate, ESMO, Open Society Foundations.

Finally, there seem to be *real commitment by global leaders* to truly address NCDs which ISN should continue to leverage. As an example, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organisation, drew attention through his speech about the massive challenge that non-communicable disease now presents in high, middle- and low-income countries. As a way to emphasise the importance of their burden, he asked who amongst the audience had an NCD or a parent or friend with an NCD, to stand. The whole General Assembly stood. Masterfully he raised the point that NCD is not just a massive challenge, but *our* massive challenge.
NEXT STEPS & CALLS TO ACTION

In the aftermath of HLM2018 and building on its momentum, ISN calls on ISN members, leaders and all stakeholders to go beyond the HLM1018 Political Declaration and recognise the need to take action on kidney disease.

To this purpose we encourage the distribution of the following advocacy documents to national and regional ministers and healthcare officials involved in the fight again NCDs and kidney disease:

2) ISN HLM2018 Statement: https://www.dropbox.com/s/kll6vr96or77lbo/HLM%202018%20on%20NCDs%20-%20draft%20statement_final.pdf?dl=0

Additionally, ISN has signed the ‘Do or Die’ Declaration launched by the NCDs Alliance in response to the Political Declaration which calls for real tangible action on NCDs: https://ncdalliance.org/news-events/news/enough-nearly-300-organisations-and-experts-calls-on-world-leaders-to-seize-the-%E2%80%98do-or-die%E2%80%99-moment-of-the-third-un-high-level-meeting-to-address-ncds. We encourage ISN Affiliated and Member Societies to sign up to the Declaration.

Finally, our advocacy work does not finish with the HLM2018. We are already engaging with WHO with the next steps in the area of NCDs by actively participating in the Global Coordination Mechanism on NCDs, preparing for the review of the WHO Action Plan 2020-25 on prevention and management on NCDs and starting to input in the preparations of the upcoming High Level meeting on Universal Health Coverage scheduled in September 2019.

For any additional question, please contact Luisa Strani (ISN Advocacy Director) at lstrani@theisn.org.