

Calls for cooperation to fight chronic disease

27 January 2011

- 35 million people die every year due to chronic diseases
- Chronic disease is no longer a “rich man’s” burden: more than 80% of deaths are in the developing world
- There is a fundamental injustice as many of these deaths are preventable
- More information on the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting 2011: <http://www.weforum.org>

Davos, Switzerland, 27 January 2011 – With success comes chronic disease. Or so it seems, as developing countries struggle with one of the consequences of rising wealth and economic success: the devastating toll of diabetes, cancer, lung and heart disease.

“Chronic disease causes 6 out of every 10 deaths worldwide,” said Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General, United Nations. It is no longer just a rich man’s problem; more than 80% of these deaths occur in developing countries. However, only 3% of development assistance goes to chronic diseases. “To fix the priorities, we must place non-communicable disease high on the development agenda.”

Industry has a strong role to play. Addressing the pharmaceutical industry, Ban Ki-moon urged more collaboration on drug development for low-income countries. He also called on the food industry to reduce sugar, sodium and transfat content as well as restricting advertising to children.

Executives from the food and pharmaceutical industry agreed, and committed to closer collaboration than ever with government and non-governmental organizations.

One exciting development is in the field of telehealth and mobile medicine, where high mobile telephone penetration in the developing world can be used for prevention and health promotion. “This is already happening for treatment of diabetes and detecting cardiac arrhythmia – it is not a pipe dream”, said Paul E. Jacobs, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, Qualcomm.

Julio Frenk, Dean, Harvard School of Public Health, urged world leaders to recognize the “enormous injustice” that diseases killing in poor countries are prevented from killing in rich countries. “We must learn from the successful HIV/AIDs movement, which overcame entrenched myths that the disease was too complex, costly and commonplace to prevent.”

Notes to Editors

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