GENEVA ¦ 9 November 2012 - The first-ever global monitoring framework to combat several of the world's biggest killers has been agreed this week by WHO Member States. The framework comprises nine voluntary global targets and 25 indicators to **prevent** and **control diseases** such as **heart** disease, **diabetes**, **cancer**, **chronic lung disease** and other **noncommunicable diseases**. The draft framework aims to focus efforts to address the impact of noncommunicable diseases and assess:

- the progress made in reducing associated illness and death,
- the reduction of exposures to the main risk factors for the diseases, including tobacco use, harmful use of alcohol, unhealthy diet and physical inactivity, and
- the response of national health systems to noncommunicable diseases.

"The new global monitoring framework will enable us to assess progress across regional and country settings and to monitor trends," says Dr Bjørn-Inge Larsen, the chairman of the formal WHO meeting. "The agreed voluntary targets are aspirational but achievable and they will drive progress in prevention and control at national, regional and global levels."

Member States reached consensus on the NCD targets and indicators during a formal three-day meeting that took place in Geneva from 5-7 November. The meeting was attended by 119 WHO Member States, the African Union, the European Union and 17 nongovernmental organizations.

One of the global voluntary targets - the 25% reduction in premature mortality from noncommunicable diseases by 2025 - had already been adopted by the World Health Assembly in May 2012.

"The indicators and voluntary global targets are key building blocks of our fight against NCDs," says Dr Oleg Chestnov, WHO's Assistant Director-General for Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health. "They will provide the foundation for advocacy, raising awareness, reinforcing political commitment and promoting global action to tackle these deadly diseases."

The 9 voluntary global targets are aimed at combating premature mortality from NCDs, harmful use of alcohol, tobacco use, physical inactivity, salt/sodium intake, raised blood pressure, diabetes, obesity, promoting drug therapy and counseling, and medicines and technologies for NCDs

The 25 indicators are aimed at measuring premature mortality, cancer incidence, harmful use or alcohol, low fruit and vegetable intake, overweight and obesity, physical inactivity, raised blood glucose, raised blood pressure, raised total cholesterol, salt/sodium intake, tobacco use, fat intake, cervical cancer screening, drug therapy and counseling to prevent heart attacks and strokes, essential NCD medicines and technologies, palliative care, policies to reduce the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children, vaccination against hepatitis B, policies to eliminate partially hydrogenated vegetable oils from food supply, and vaccination against human papillomavirus.

The UN High-level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases in September 2011 was a defining moment for development cooperation: the Political Declaration on NCDs which was adopted at the meeting sets a new global agenda to ensure that globalization becomes a positive force for all the world's peoples of present and future generations. Noncommunicable diseases were identified as a new frontier in the fight to improve socio-economic development in developing countries and WHO was tasked to develop a global monitoring framework and voluntary global targets and a Global Action Plan for 2013-2020.

The global monitoring framework will now be considered first by the WHO Executive Board during its 132nd session in January 2013 and then be submitted to the World Health Assembly in May 2013 for consideration and adoption.

Noncommunicable diseases are the leading cause of death in the world and represent over 63% of all annual deaths. These diseases can be prevented and their impacts significantly reduced, with millions of lives saved and untold suffering avoided. Of the 36 million people who die annually from these diseases, 14 million are aged under 70 years, and regarded therefore as premature and largely preventable deaths. 80% of the deaths related to noncommunicable disease occur in the developing world.