



EU Action on Non-Communicable Diseases in light of the UN Summit on NCDs

12 May 2011, European Parliament, Strasbourg

On Thursday 12 May 2011 the **EU Diabetes Working Group (EUDWG)** met in the European Parliament, Strasbourg to discuss the UN Summit for Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs), and the EU action in preparation for the Summit.

The meeting was hosted by the **EUDWG Co-Chair Marisa Matias, MEP (GUE/NGL, PT)** and organised by the **European Coalition for Diabetes (ECD)**.

Among the participants were all EUDWG Co-Chairs - **Baroness Sarah Ludford MEP (ALDE, UK)**, **Christel Schaldemose MEP (S&D, Denmark)** and **Simon Busuttil MEP (EPP, Malta)**. The meeting was attended by other MEPs with an interest in health issues and especially in diabetes - **Sean Kelly MEP (ELDR, Ireland)**, **Cercas Alejandro MEP (S&D, Spain)** and **Antonia Parvanova MEP (ALDE, Bulgaria)**. Representatives of the pharmaceutical industry were also present at this meeting.

Following the introduction by Marisa Matias, **Anne Felton, President of the Foundation of European Nurses in Diabetes (FEND)** and **Vice-President of the International Federation of Diabetes (IDF)** briefed the audience about the upcoming UN Summit on NCDs, which will be held in New York in September 2011, and called on MEPs to act in order to ensure a successful outcome of the Summit. Anne Felton spoke about the IDF Diabetes Roadmap Shaping the UN High-Level Summit on NCDs with the mission of 'Promoting diabetes care, prevention and a cure worldwide'. The IDF has 220+ member associations in 160+ countries world wide and an individual membership of more than 2 million, a combined income of USD 750 million and 7 regional offices.

In 2009, the IDF formed the NCD Alliance together with three other NGOs: World Heart Federation, the Union for international Cancer Control and the International Union against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease. Initially, in 2009, the NCD Alliance had four main requests:

1. A major UN Summit on NCDs;
2. Recognition of NCD links with the millennium development goals (MDGs) successor goals post 2015;

3. Funding for essential NCD medicines, technologies and care;
4. Integration of NCDs, especially at primary health care level.

The insistence on holding a UN Summit on NCDs was because the 2001 AIDS Summit, which had been a turning point in raising the profile of AIDS as a serious condition. In addition, the AIDS Summit had led to the creation of a Global Fund and to a measurable Outcomes Document for which governments must report upon every 2 years. However, the AIDS movement already had a strong UN body – UNAIDS, and a strong civil society movement.

On 13 May 2010 a UN platform was secured for a Summit on NCDs (UN Resolution 64/265). Such a unique global political opportunity was described as “our chance to broker an international commitment that puts non-communicable diseases high on the development agenda” (World Economic Forum, Davos 2011).

The 2-day UN Summit on NCDs (19-20 September 2011) will be held at the UN in New York for Heads of State or Heads of Government. There will be three thematic roundtables covering five main topics: incidence and impact; national capacity policy, prevention, control; international cooperation and coordination.

A concise action-oriented **Outcome Document** is planned and NGOs will be a part of the process. The Inter Parliamentary Union will play a role. In addition, Adrian Sanders MP, Chair of the Inter-Parliamentary MP Group in UK has established an **International Parliamentarian Group** specifically addressing diabetes. This group is formed by national parliamentarians coming from all European member states and it is expanding rapidly.

National parliamentarians with an interest in diabetes and who would like to join the group are invited to contact Adrian Sanders MP (E-mail: sandersa@parliament.uk).

Other recent developments include a Civil Society Task Force formed with 7 members. Moreover, WHO Regional Consultations had finished and the IDF had been strongly represented during a **WHO Global Health Forum on NCDs** and **Russia Ministerial Conferences on NCDs** in April 2011. The Outcomes Document negotiations for the UN Summit would start shortly with a **Civil Society Hearing on 16 June 2011 in New York**. Outcomes Document negotiations are modelled on the 2001 HIV AIDS document, there are 34 targets and goals to which UN member states are required to commit to. Since NCDs need a holistic approach, the targets and goals included in the Outcomes Document are not prioritised.

The 34 recommendations include among other:

- establishing a ‘Stop NCDs Partnership’ within the UN system;
- a UN Decade of Action on NCDs 2012-2022;
- reduction of NCD deaths by at least 2% per annum;
- development and implementation of comprehensive strategies to reduce childhood obesity by 2013;
- universal access to affordable high-quality essential NCD medicines and technologies.

For the UN Summit on NCDs, IDF has developed a **Diabetes Roadmap Programme** with Five Key Work Areas specific to diabetes:

1. Leading global advocacy for diabetes;
2. Producing diabetes evidence and analysis;
3. Promoting best practice and workable solutions;
4. Mobilising members at national and regional levels;
5. Building strategic alliances for diabetes.

As a leading Global Advocate for Diabetes, the IDF has a **Call to Action on Diabetes** launched on World Diabetes Day 2010 in Beijing. This Call to Action seeks to influence governments, decision-makers and broader stakeholders in order to improve health outcomes of people with diabetes, to prevent development of type 2 diabetes and to stop discrimination against people with diabetes.

In addition to the Call to Action on Diabetes, the IDF has prepared an **Advocacy Toolkit**, which is specifically tailored for the UN Summit on NCDs and it is available at www.idf.org. The toolkit is an accompaniment to the **Diabetes Evidence and Analysis: IDF Policy Briefing Series**, which includes The International Charter of Rights and Responsibilities of People with Diabetes setting out rights and responsibilities for people with diabetes in care, information, education, and social justice. IDF Member Associations are mobilised with a Consultation on Diabetes Priorities and Needs to identify global/regional priorities for the UN Summit.

Anne Felton concluded her presentation with **a call to the MEPs and others present to ensure that Heads of State/Government attend the UN Summit**. Further, Ann Felton also called for the inclusion of NGOs in national delegations to the UN Summit and encouraged the participants to send the NCD Alliance Proposed Outcomes Document to key decision makers in their countries. Finally, Ms Felton invited the audience to join the NCD Alliance Common Interest Group: info@ncdalliance.org.

Discussion

The meeting closed with a discussion, which included contributions from all EUDWG Co-Chairs, IDF and ECD representatives, MEPs and representatives of the pharmaceutical industry.

Following Anne Felton's presentation, **Baroness Sarah Ludford MEP (ALDE, UK, EUDWG Co-Chair)** asked what the EU is planning in relation to the UN Summit. She thought that the High Representative Catherine Ashton had secured some progress in EU representation at the UN (noting that Member States have always tried to frustrate collective EU representation). She also did not know how health would be represented as EU responsibility for health was relatively modest in relation to Member States. Sarah Ludford underlined that it would be impressive to have a coordinated and coherent EU action together with the wider Council of Europe family, and the 27 Member States. For example, had the ENVI Committee organised any activity, perhaps inviting Commissioner John Dalli to one of its meetings.

Sarah Ludford said that the EUDWG Co-Chairs had met the previous day (11 May) to discuss the European Parliament Resolution on Diabetes, scheduled for November 2011. Regarding the Resolution, Sarah Ludford mentioned that she had now got the support of the ALDE group and key colleagues such as her Coordinator on the relevant Committee and Antonia Parvanova, MEP who was a “leading light” on the health part of the ENVI Committee.

Anne Felton said that in relation to the UN Summit the EUDWG had previously raised a Parliamentary Question but that the response had been unclear. Timing was critical and the EUDWG via the ECD secretariat and Liaison Officer Emilia Miloiu could ask further Parliamentary Questions.

Chris Delicata, President IDF Europe, said that the support of all the main political groups was essential. However, since this is a local and global issue local lobbying is also required.

Christel Schaldemose MEP (S&D, Denmark, EUDWG Co-Chair) said that it may be difficult to get National Heads of Government to the UN Summit, for example there were about to be elections in Denmark. She added that the EUDWG was trying to get support for a European Parliament Resolution for Diabetes requesting that the EU should have a strategy for diabetes and in that strategy there should be an indication of how we work at global level e.g. in the UN. NCDs as a concept are difficult to communicate and a differentiation of individual diseases must be made (as ‘diabetes’) in order to get the support of the public and the media.

Anne Felton agreed but said there was an aversion within the EU public health institutions (who had coined the term NCDs) to discuss vertical diseases and focus was on horizontal issues and health determinants.

Chris Delicata stated that focus must be upon individual diseases within the overall NCDs strategy.

Antonia Parvanova MEP (ALDE, Bulgaria) said that, being philosophical, the topic being discussed was important for the life and wellbeing of coming generations.

The resulting NCDs are what we have done to ourselves through our lifestyle.

Looking at social factors for NCDs, she wondered how the goal of reducing mortality by 2% had been set. Such drastic reduction needed everything to change and a period of careful preparation for such change. It would mean reversing lifestyle by one hundred years in terms of food quality and physical activity. Without having the food industry on board such an initiative would be difficult. There was a need to educate MEPs on diabetes and on food. There had been complicated discussions already on this about food labelling. The question was how to research and innovate, and the food industry is much further ahead in this than we realise. Disease prevention is of major importance but it requires informed choices. Any action should include all stakeholders and especially the food industry. There would then be a better idea of how to reduce mortality by 2%, which is still an enormous goal as this percentage represents millions of people worldwide. We should aim not to fail as the MDGs had failed especially in Europe, and therefore actions required careful focus.

Anne Felton agreed that the 2% mentioned is challenging. Where impact may be seen in a shorter period of time was in the developing countries. This was not only a health issue but a matter of city planning, education in schools, etc. Contribution of genetic factors cannot be ignored and it is important not to neglect type 1 diabetes and gestational diabetes, all of which would require monitoring instruments.

Finally, Antonia Parvanova mentioned that the association of food industries is eager to cooperate on this issue.

Simon Busuttil MEP (EPP, Malta, EUDWG Co-Chair) thanked Anne Felton for the presentation and asked that the MEPs ensure that the EU provides a meaningful input for the UN Summit in September 2011. Simon Busuttil underlined that both he and Chris Delicata will meet Commissioner John Dalli in Malta the following week for a diabetes event on diabetic retinopathy. With his help the EU can give a meaningful input.

Further, Simon Busuttil agreed that there seemed to be a resistance to focus upon specific diseases but that the horizontal approach was the context in which the activity must take place and it should be ensured that diabetes was on that agenda. He said that MEPs should now push the Commission and mentioned that there could be a debate (a debate was being planned for November on diabetes ahead of the Parliament Resolution) but before that a horizontal approach could be to organise a debate on the NCD Summit, with a statement from the European Commission. As all of this would happen before the summer break and concrete action was required now.

Erwan Giquel (NovoNordisk) said that The European Federation of the Pharmaceutical Industries and Associations (EFPIA) would be meeting on 15 June 2011 in Brussels for its AGM and there would be a workshop on NCDs, to which the Commission were also be invited to present their case. Anne Felton said that she could attend.

Marisa Matias closed the meeting with thanks for the presentation and the discussion. She reminded participants of the activity concerning the Parliament Resolution on Diabetes. She said that, as regards the UN Summit on NCDs, within the Lisbon Treaty health care was of a priority but that this was subject to national sovereignty. There are currently many inequalities across Europe in terms of healthcare and NCDs, which are mostly connected to social conditions. However, Alzheimer had got a European strategy. Marisa Matias also mentioned that diabetes had been a priority during the Spanish Presidency of the EU and still nothing was done at that time.

Emilia Miloiu introduced herself as the new ECD Liaison Officer and she said that regarding EU high level representation at the UN Summit, the EU Presidency should not be forgotten. In addition, she mentioned that the food industry should be perhaps stimulated with incentives to take voluntary actions for reducing contents of salt, sugar and saturated fats in their products.

Christel Schaldemose replied by saying the NCDs were a political fact and that the diabetes community could make NCDs more concrete by promoting diabetes as a 'model' for disease

prevention and monitoring. Marisa Matias said also not to forget the contributions of genes and lifestyle in any actions.

Finally, Chris Delicata thanked Marisa Matias and the EUDWG and said the meeting had been interesting and an action plan would be created towards the UN Summit. In the meantime, those participants new to the group were invited to attend other EUDWG meetings and they would be notified via the European Coalition for Diabetes (ECD) Secretariat.