

The Sydney Resolution

February 2008

Healthy People in Healthy Places on a Healthy Planet

The way we live is making people sick. It is also making our planet sick. It is not sustainable. We can do better.

The world is now facing the most serious challenges to human health. The magnitude and complexity of these challenges require the broadest alliance and partnership of stakeholder groups to confront this growing and urgent problem. Four preventable chronic diseases – heart disease/stroke, diabetes, chronic lung disease and cancer – account for 50% of the world's deaths. Their underlying causes are tobacco use, physical inactivity and poor diet.

These preventable chronic diseases are at epidemic proportions. They are increasingly affecting younger people and cause physical disability, depression, and early death. There are immense costs to society in lost productivity and increased use of health services. The epidemic threatens economic stability in developed and developing countries alike. Families striving to escape the poverty trap are pushed back into disadvantage and despair. The problem is similar to that of climate change in that it affects the whole world, is the result of our way of living and, crucially, can be reversed.

Urgent action is needed. There is a clear way forward. The four major chronic diseases can largely be prevented, but there is no simple or quick solution. To achieve real change, it is necessary to bring together dedicated stakeholders from all parts of society. The development of how we live as societies, share opportunities, interact with the natural environment and how we design our cities, transport systems, food systems, work places and housing will fundamentally determine future patterns of health and disease. We need health services focussed on prevention as well as cures and we need our world free of tobacco. We must fundamentally reshape our social and physical environments so that they are aligned with eradicating this epidemic of chronic disease.

The call to action

We call on the United Nations' agencies, governments, corporations and businesses, donor agencies, professionals, consumers, non-government organisations and employee unions, civil society and individuals to collaborate in taking urgent action to halt the devastating global impact of chronic diseases. We know that change is possible for individuals and families, communities and nations and that the change will promote economic and environmental sustainability. We need:

- **Healthy places – designing towns, cities and rural areas, which are smoke-free, and where it is easy to walk, cycle and play, with unpolluted open spaces and safe local areas that foster social interaction.**
- **Healthy food – making healthy food affordable, and available to all.**
- **Healthy business – engaging business in the agendas promoting healthy people, healthy places, healthy planet and making good health good business.**
- **Healthy public policy – formulating comprehensive, innovative and 'joined-up' legislation and social and economic policies that promote health.**
- **Healthy societies – addressing equity and socio-economic disadvantage.**

Oxford Health Alliance, 27 February 2008

See: www.oxha.org, www.3four50.com and Grand Challenges in chronic non-communicable disease. Nature 2007 450; 494-496