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Health Ministers adopt New Delhi Declaration to combating high blood pressure

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Health Ministers from WHO's South-East Asia Region adopted the "New Delhi Declaration on High Blood Pressure". The Health Ministers committed to strive towards measurable reduction in the prevalence of hypertension in the region by 2025. Hypertension is the leading risk factor for mortality worldwide, causing 9 million deaths each year. In South-East Asia every third adult is affected by hypertension with an increased risk of heart disease, stroke and kidney failure. The poor are disproportionately affected by hypertension.

"High blood pressure is a strong and reliable warning signal that health is at risk and that something needs to be done. But it often shows no symptoms for years and by the time symptoms appear, cardiovascular disease is advanced and the risk of heart attack or stroke is increased" said WHO Director General, Dr Margaret Chan. "The public health challenge is to get more people routinely tested early to enable proper management of high blood pressure through life style change or medication" she added.

India's Minister for Health and family Welfare Mr Ghulam Nabi Azad highlighted that India is soon to be certified as a polio free country. He acknowledged WHO undivided support to the Government's strong political will and leadership at the highest levels. "India is called the 'pharmacy of the world' for producing high quality and affordble generic drugs which have substantially brought down the prices" he said.

He further added "India also has several institutions that excel in public health and are open to neighboring countries in the area of capacity building aimed at increasing skilled human resources in health. we have developed indigineous vaccines and testing reagents for H1N1 and other influenzas; indigenous vaccine for Japanese Encephalitis and a magnifying device for cervical cancer screening in the field."

through the New Delhi Declaration, ministers commited to:

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- Multisectorila collaboration with key stakeholders and to empower people to make healthy choices for health lives;

- develop multisectoral policies to promote physical activity and healthy diet and eliminate exposure to tobacco and harmful use of alcohol;

- implement salt reduction strategies, regulate the food industry including food labeling, and reduction of salt in processed foods

- legislate for 100% tobacco smoke-free settings

- promote universal access to prevention, treatment and care for the integrated management of noncommunicable diseases including hypertension, through a primary health care approach.

India hosted the 31st meeting of Ministers of Health of the WHo South-East Asia Region. the Ministers reviewed progress on decisions and recommendations from previous meetings.