

Remarks by Louise Kantrow
Permanent Representative of the
International Chamber of Commerce to the United Nations in New York

Civil Society Informal Interactive Hearing
June 16, 2011

Roundtable Two: National and Local Solutions

Thank you for inviting me to participate in today's civil society informal interactive hearing to inform the preparatory process for the General Assembly High-Level Meeting on non-communicable diseases which will be held from September 19-20, 2011.

I am pleased to be representing the International Chamber of Commerce and its member companies. As many of you may know, the ICC is the largest, most representative business organization in the world. It is a global organization that represents 90 national business organizations that are located in over 130 countries. The ICC represents tens of thousands of corporations in every region of the world from small SMEs to large multi-national companies. The ICC has consultative status with several UN agencies including the UN's Economic and Social Council and is involved in many various UN processes.

Business has an interest in curbing non-communicable diseases for a variety of reasons including having productive employees, providing products, medicines, services, and technical support to manage NCDs, and sustaining a beneficial long-term relationship within the community it works. As Professor Bloom said earlier today, it makes economic sense for business to be involved in curbing NCDs.

Business understands this and I am here today to share with you some thoughts of how business is already engaged in curbing NCDs, how it can make a difference and what priorities business would like to see reflected in the outcome document of the UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs. My industry colleagues in the later panel will speak on behalf of their sectors in more depth about how they are engaged on NCDs. However, I wanted to give you some general examples of how the private sector can contribute to combating NCDs.

Industry has taken concrete actions that include global public commitments to address food reformulation, consumer information, responsible marketing, promotion of healthier lifestyles, and public-private partnerships. In fact, cooperative relationships with industry have already led to many favorable outcomes related to diet and physical activity. There are initiatives by the food industry

to reduce the fat, sugar, and salt content of processed foods and portion sizes, to increase introduction of innovative, healthier and nutritious choices.

Industry is also partnering with governmental and nongovernmental organizations to encourage more active, healthier lifestyles which have contributed to health gains worldwide.

With the proliferation of information and communications technology, there are many useful tools including mobile devices. For example in developing countries, where there is high mobile telephone penetration, phones can be used for prevention, health promotion and treatment of diabetes and detecting cardiac arrhythmia. By using a computer and webcam, doctors assist in diagnosing and providing consultation on various medical conditions.

As all you know, medicines are an essential component of the treatment of cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, chronic obstructive pulmonary diseases including asthma, many cancers, and tobacco dependence.

And finally, business also can help disseminate information to help fight NCDs. As you know, companies have considerable experience in successful campaigns whether it is in marketing, advertising or advocacy. However, the demands on companies to involve themselves in information and awareness campaigns are considerable. Thus, if they involve themselves in too many or too often, message fatigue sets in. Public health campaigns are most successful when aligned with other high profile company initiatives and national campaigns.

These are just a few general examples. However, we all know that all companies have an interest in ensuring they have a healthy and resilient workforce to maintain their competitive edge. In fact, 54% of the world's people are employees. As employers, business can have an impact on the health of their employees and those employees can impact their families and their communities. In addition, business that has work-related wellness programs to curb NCDs can have an influence on their supply chain as they share experiences with their colleagues.

NCDs are a societal matter and therefore require whole-of-society and whole-of-government solutions. Enterprises across all sectors in both the public and private domains are happy to play their part, on a voluntary basis, alongside all the other actors, in combating the effects of NCDs on economies. However, the solutions are not global but local. They must be adopted to meet and reflect the needs of the local people and local communities.

To conclude my remarks, I would like to say a few words about what business would like to see reflected in the outcome document from the UN High-Level Meeting on NCDs.

Any global action should allow Members States to adopt the policies that align their national priorities/interests and that are culturally relevant.

A multi-stakeholder approach is needed to curb NCDs and the private sector will play its role but we also urge governments to look at NCDs in a holistic way.

NCDs are not only a challenge for the Health Ministries but other sections of the government such as agriculture and transportation. All relevant ministries and sectors should work together to find solutions to prevent and control NCDs.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak with you today. I look forward to continuing this discussion as we approach the High-Level Meeting on NCDs in September.