Stroke Leaders Highlight Global Cost of Government Inaction

Today on World Stroke Day, October 29th the World Stroke Organization, is calling for urgent action and investment to address the growing burden of stroke and circulatory diseases globally.

Highlighting the disappointing outcome of the recent UN High Level Meeting on Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) the WSO President, Prof Michael Brainin said,

‘We know that we 80% of strokes could be prevented by addressing a small number of risk factors, including hypertension, diet, smoking and lack of exercise. We also know that action on prevention would also contribute to a massive scale reduction in heart disease, cancer and diabetes.’

‘The impact of stroke on individuals, families and society as a whole is devastating. Stroke survivors can face significant impairment of movement, speech, cognition alongside debilitating psychological, social and financial problems.

‘With this knowledge, the current lack of political will and investment is cannot be easily comprehended, especially when you consider the cost of such inaction. While 5.5 million people die as a result of stroke each year, there are 80m stroke survivors in the world, many of whom live with some form of disability or impairment. While the costs to individuals is incalculable, the cost to society is astronomical.’

A recent policy document ‘Driving Sustainable Action for Circulatory Health’ published by the WSO and its partners in the Global Coalition for Circulatory Health, has calculated the global cost of circulatory diseases, including stroke, at US$957 Billion in 2015. On current projections this figure is set to rise to US$1044 Billion by 2030. The white paper sets out four key areas for action that, if enacted, would ensure delivery of global goals on disease reduction which are driving the rise in direct and indirect costs of NCDs. These include legislative interventions that:

1. Deliver policies and programmes to address tobacco, alcohol and unhealthy foods, promote clean air and deliver a built environment that fosters safe physical activity.
2. Ensure access to affordable, quality-assured essential medicines, delivered by adequately trained staff, including access to multi-therapy treatments.

3. Mobilise sufficient resources to combat non-communicable diseases including stroke. The taxation of unhealthy products such as alcohol, tobacco, unhealthy foods and non-alcoholic beverages (such as sugar-sweetened beverages) would generate revenues that could be directed to further prevention and control of circulatory diseases at global and national levels.

4. Put in place reliable, simple, and fit-for-purpose surveillance systems for monitoring the burden of stroke and the prevalence of NCD risk factors and treatment of stroke at national and global levels.

Prof Brainin concluded 'At the recent UN High Level Meeting on NCDs in New York, governments delivered a weak response to a global crisis and agreed to wait 7 years before reviewing progress. In that time another 38.5 million people will die of stroke. We can’t wait until 2025 to calculate our losses, we need strong leadership and bold action to save lives now.'

To download the policy paper please visit http://ow.ly/QukO30mnqn0

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Notes to Editors

About the WSO

The World Stroke Organization is the global voice for stroke professionals, patients and caregivers. WSO has a membership of over 80 scientific and stroke support organizations around the world and represents over 50,000 stroke experts and many more patients and caregivers.

WSO works with member organizations and partners to ensure coordinated, targeted and sustained action to address prevention and to improve access to evidence-based treatment and quality clinical care for stroke patients nationally, regionally and globally. WSO is a WHO implementing partner and is in Official Relations with the UN ECOSOC.

About World Stroke Day
World Stroke Day on October 29th was established by the WSO as an annual awareness and advocacy focal point to highlight key issues in stroke prevention, treatment and support.

**About the Global Coalition for Circulatory Health**

The Global Coalition for Circulatory Health was launched in 2017 at the WHO Global Conference on Non-communicable Diseases in Montevideo, Uruguay. It brings together international, regional and national stakeholders to drive the urgent action needed to combat heart disease and stroke. The Coalition leadership group comprises partners with an interest in heart disease and stroke and who also hold official relations with WHO. It is made up of the following organizations:

- Framework Convention Alliance for Tobacco Control
- International Alliance of Patients' Organizations
- International Council of Nurses
- International Diabetes Federation
- International Society of Nephrology
- World Heart Federation of Public Associations
- World Heart Federation
- World Hypertension League
- World Organization of Family Doctors
- World Stroke Organization