



## **PLENARY SESSION 0**

**POLITICAL ECONOMY OF NCD: PLAYERS, POWERS AND POLICY PROCESSES**



## | BACKGROUND

Noncommunicable diseases (NCD) epidemic constitute one of the major challenges for development in the 21 century, in terms of health and well-being as well as obstacle for socio-economic development in all societies, rich and poor alike. NCD are the leading causes of morbidity and mortality, claiming 40 million out of 56 million annual deaths globally. The number of premature death from NCD continues to rise disproportionately in low income and lower middle income countries where 47% (7 million) of premature deaths from NCDs occur.

NCD has got significant global political attention, since adoption of the Political Declaration on NCD prevention and Control at UN General Assembly in 2011; leading to the adoption of nine Global Voluntary Targets in 2013 covering targets on premature mortality, risk reduction and national system response; and the adoption of SDG 3.4 to reduce premature mortality from NCDs by one-third in 2030. However, under a business-as-usual scenario, or without scaling up efforts significantly before 2020, the current rate of decline in the risk of dying prematurely from non-communicable diseases is insufficient to meet the target by 2030.

Keeping social and economic significance of NCD epidemic and the progress we made so far, global community has witnessed two wonders. First wonder, there is a major systematic barrier separating what we know and what we do. Evidence shows that most NCDs are preventable, delayable and manageable. Furthermore, evidence also differentiates interventions those do not work from those cost-effective and feasible Best Buys interventions. Population-based preventive intervention can prevent half up to two-third of premature deaths, while effective individual-targeted health care can prevent one-third up to half of premature deaths. Evidence also confirms that investment for only one to three dollars per capita per year could make significant NCD premature mortality decline. The global community fail to close this know-do gap.

The second wonder; we know well that most effective interventions lie outside health care system boundary. Therefore, collaboration within and beyond public sector, or so-called Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Society approaches are needed. Effective multisectoral coordination and collaboration are still a rare case in reality.

“Political economy” recently emerges as an innovative tool to better addressing policy agenda and program, beyond linear technocratic approach. It focuses on both politics and economics and interaction between them; power and resources, how they are distributed and contested and the resulting implications for development outcome; it also considers underlying interests, incentives, rents/rent distribution, historical legacies, prior experiences, social trends and how factors effect or impede change.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile, OECD<sup>2</sup> describes “Political economy analysis is concerned with the interaction of political and economic processes in a society: the distribution of power and wealth between different groups and individuals, and the processes that create, sustain and transform these relationships overtime”.

While policy direction to tackle NCD is pretty clear, governments often find it difficult to safeguard the health and well-being of their population, in the context of multiple stakeholders with different and common values and interests, unevenly distributed influence, and with restricted capability. Report to the third High Level Meeting of UN General Assembly on NCD Prevention and Control identifies five groups of challenge which hamper the global progress of effort to tackle NCD epidemic. These are 1) weak and non-integrated political actions; 2) ineffective health system response; 3) inadequate national capacity; 4) insufficient international finance on NCD; and 5) industry interference. Arguably, these five major challenges are all about policy process of domestic and international stakeholders, policy actors as well as powers and interactions between them, leading to system competency to deal with NCD in any society.

Aims to foster and enhance global momentum for NCD prevention and control, PMAC 2019 introduces an unconventional outlook on NCD epidemic, through political economy perspective. At the outset, this Plenary is to set the scene and provides conceptual platforms to articulate all three sub-themes; better understanding of NCD determinants through political economy lens (sub-theme 1), promote comprehensive system approach to address NCD (sub-theme 2), and lastly, 3) unfold hindrance of and strategize roles of governments (sub-theme 3).

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1 World Bank, How-to notes: political economy assessment at sector and project levels (2011)

2 DFID. Political economy: how to note (2009)

## | OBJECTIVES

- To introduce and provide overarching conceptual fundamental for the whole PMAC 2019, covering all three sub-themes, in particular how political economy is important but neglected for NCD prevention and control
- To discuss how the whole society approach could better address political economy of NCDs





Panelist / Speaker

## Margaret Chan

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Dr. Margaret Chan, from the People's Republic of China, is the Director-General Emeritus of the World Health Organization (WHO). As the 7th Director-General from January 2007 to June 2017, Dr. Chan led WHO through a period of profound change. The political, social, economic and epidemiological challenges facing health in the early 21st century have been unprecedented in their complexity and global in their impact. Population ageing, antimicrobial resistance, climate change, obesity, and the globalised marketing of unhealthy products, chronic non communicable diseases overtook infectious diseases as the leading killers worldwide. The global economic slowdown since 2008 also affected populations around the world as many governments struggled to finance basic health services. Despite these immense challenges, Dr. Chan's leadership ensured sustained progress in improving health and life-expectancy in populations around the world. During her tenure, Dr. Chan led the global movement on "universal health coverage", and the global response to major health emergencies like the influenza pandemic, Ebola and Zika epidemics. She has also transformed WHO into one of the most transparent and accountable international organisations by initiating an ambitious program of reform since 2011. As Director-General, Dr. Chan frequently emphasised the importance of working in partnership with other stakeholders in society to achieve common goals in health. Dr. Chan obtained her B.A., M.D. and DSc degrees from the Western University, Canada and a MSc in public health from the National University of Singapore. She completed a programme for management development at Harvard Business School in Boston.