



Namibia addresses non-communicable diseases (NCDs)

10 August, Windhoek: The Prime Minister of the Republic of Namibia, Dr Saara Kuungongelwa-Amadhila, launched the National Strategy on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) on 10 August 2018 in Windhoek. The Strategy aims to reduce the preventable and avoidable burden of morbidity, mortality and disability due to NCDs in the country.

The Prime Minister said that over 50% of deaths in Namibia are due to non-communicable diseases. The most common NCDs in Namibia are cardiovascular diseases, diabetes mellitus, cancers and chronic obstructive airway diseases, the PM said. Namibia also has a very high prevalence of high blood pressure which is a key risk factor for stroke and heart attacks.

“Almost one in five Namibian adults is obese due to consumption of unhealthy diets and sedentary lifestyles. Further, the country’s total per capita consumption of alcohol stands at 10.8 litres per year, again making it one of the highest in the SADC region,” she said.

Speaking at the same occasion, the Deputy Minister of Health and Social Services, Hon. Julieta Kavetuna, emphasised the need to prioritise investment in the prevention and control of NCDs to reduce the cost associated with treatment.

Dr Charles Sagoe-Moses, WHO Representative, in his remarks commended the country for addressing the risk factors of NCDs and for putting measures in place to improve access to all who require treatment.

“The country has a unit dedicated to the prevention and control of NCDs, there are measures through legislation and policies to control tobacco and alcohol use. Namibia is one of the few countries in Africa with a cancer registry,” Dr. Sagoe-Moses said.

He further highlighted that there is a need to strengthen efforts in the development of treatment guidelines and protocol as well as to develop health promotion programmes to address unhealthy diets and physical inactivity.

The age standardised NCD death rate for the WHO Africa Region was over 650 per 100,000 populations compared to the global average of 539 per 100,000 population. This was revealed by Dr. Barango Prebo from the WHO inter-country support team who came to support the launch. He further stated that NCD risk behaviors such as physical inactivity, unhealthy diets, tobacco use and harmful use of alcohol were on the rise among young people. For example 18% of young people in Africa use tobacco products and half of adolescents are exposed to second hand smoking.

The launch of the multi-sectoral plan paves the way for a multi-sectoral response with possible coordination by the Office of the Prime Minister.