Remarks by Guest of Honour
WHO Representative to Bangladesh

Inaugural Ceremony of World Health Day 2016

Date: 7 April, 2016, 10:00 AM at Osmani Memorial Auditorium, Dhaka

— His Excellency, the Chief Guest, Honourable Minister for Health and Family Welfare
— His Excellency, the Special Guest, Honourable State Minister for Health and Family Welfare
— Distinguished speakers and officials in the Dias
  (1. Director General, DGHS)
  (2. Director General, Directorate of Family Planning)
  (3. President, Bangladesh Medical Association)
  (4. Secretary General, Bangladesh Medical Association)
— Honourable Chairperson, the Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
— Distinguished guests

Respected Dignitaries, Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure in welcoming you all on the occasion of World Health Day 2016. Every year, on 7 April, we celebrate World Health Day, to mark not only the anniversary of WHO but also to highlight important health issues of global concern during the entire year. It is a very special day for everyone engaged in public health and people all over the world who are committed and dedicated to the health of the people. This year, the focus is on diabetes.

Diabetes is one of the major public health threats of our time. The number of cases globally has increased fourfold from 108 million in 1980 to 422 million in 2014. Diabetes is now the eighth leading cause of death worldwide and is likely to become the seventh by 2030, unless intense and focused efforts are made by governments, communities and individuals.

Approximately 96 million people in the South-East Asia region alone have diabetes and half of those affected are unaware that they have the condition. Without treatment they face potentially serious health consequences, such as damage to the heart, blood vessels, eyes, kidneys and nerves, raising the risk of heart attack and stroke at an early age and premature death.

Here in Bangladesh, almost one in ten adults is suffering from diabetes. Contrary to popular belief, diabetes affects all sectors of society and in Bangladesh; even the poorest of communities are affected and pushed further into a cycle of poverty as they struggle to cope with costs of medical treatment for their condition. Results from one of our surveys carried out in 2010 showed that 83 percent of the population of Bangladesh had never had their blood glucose level measured. Urgent action is needed to counter the rise in diabetes through better awareness, detection, prevention and treatment.

Diabetes is something that we are all familiar with. The good news is that it can be prevented. It's very simple. Taking 30 minutes of exercise every day, 5 days per week, maintaining a normal body weight and eating a healthier diet with smaller portion sizes, have been shown to be effective in preventing or delaying the onset of type-2 diabetes.

By making these simple changes to our lives we can prevent or delay the onset of type-2 diabetes. We need to encourage the public to take these steps.
As well as individuals, many sectors of society have a role to play in the fight against diabetes. These include governments, employers, educators, manufacturers, civil society, private sector and the media.

I would like to take this opportunity to call upon everyone in this room to take effective measures for the development and adoption of internationally agreed standards and norms for the diagnosis and treatment of diabetes, its complications and risk factors. WHO would like to assist the Ministry of Health in any way possible to support the government’s efforts to improve the health of the people of Bangladesh.

Diabetes control requires truly accelerated and multisectoral efforts. It demands a high level of political commitment, sustainable human resource and financing and an active and empowered community, taking full ownership of their health. Let’s all work together to prevent, beat and treat diabetes. Together, we can make healthy choices every day to keep diabetes at bay.

Thank you.