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Statement by John Dalli, Commissioner for Health and Consumer Policy, on the occasion of World Heart Day

World Heart Day is a good opportunity to remind ourselves of the major health, societal and economic burden caused by cardio vascular diseases and other chronic diseases. 4 million EU citizens die every year because of a chronic disease.

Just last week, at the United Nations General Assembly, world leaders have shown that they are engaged in finding global solutions to reduce this burden. I am encouraged by the general consensus reached on this occasion for prevention to be the cornerstone of our action to reduce chronic diseases.

Cardiovascular diseases, as it is the case with many other chronic diseases, are largely preventable. They are often the result of smoking, poor diet, insufficient physical activity and harmful alcohol consumption. We cannot just wait and do nothing while our citizens smoke away or drink away their health and their future.

I believe we need to step up efforts to arm our citizens with the information they need to make the right choices for a long and healthy life. We need to address the root causes of chronic diseases.

This is why I have put prevention at the heart of EU health action, using all the different tools at our disposal. For example we are currently reviewing EU legislation on tobacco products and consolidating our work with Member States and across society to bring forward concrete action to address nutrition, physical activity, and alcohol related harm. We have recently agreed on a framework for salt reduction, which we are expanding to other nutrients. We are also looking at solutions to protect young people against harmful drinking.

The European Commission is committed to rising to the challenge, by working together with the heart health community and all other key actors. The new reflection process on chronic diseases provides an excellent opportunity to shape together innovative ideas to effectively respond to this challenge.

More information: http://ec.europa.eu/health/major_chronic_diseases/policy/index_en.htm