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General Assembly President urges greater use of mobile technologies in health



General Assembly President Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser

19 September 2011 –

The rapid expansion in the use of information and communications technologies in developing countries provides them with a crucial tool to prevent and control diseases, the President of the General Assembly said today, urging leaders to promote the application of digital technologies in health.

“Only five years ago, who would have imagined that today a woman in sub-Saharan Africa could use a mobile phone to access health information on bringing her pregnancy safely to term,” said Nassir Abdulaziz Al-Nasser, the President of the 66th Session of the General Assembly.

“Or that today a young person in the Middle East could use a mobile phone to help manage diabetes,” Mr. Al-Nasser said at the South-South Awards ceremony on Digital Health for Development, on the sidelines of the General Assembly’s High-level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs).

Mr. Al-Nasser said he believed that digital health for development represented a “fresh and invigorating approach” to global health and could facilitate the achievement of the health targets of the Millennium Development Goals ([MDGs](#)) that aim to reduce hunger and poverty, maternal and infant mortality, diseases and lack of access to education and health, all by 2015.

“Indeed, there is growing evidence that the use of these technologies can be a critical component of some aspects of health. I fully believe that information and communications technologies can enable countries to meet the 2015 deadline,” he added.

Speaking to Member States of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) at a separate function, Mr. Al-Nasser paid tribute to the region for its role in ensuring that response to NCDs was placed on the forefront of global efforts to eradicate poverty and improve global health.

“Your agenda has been ambitious and courageous,” said Mr. Al-Nasser. “You were aiming to raise the NCDs within the United Nations to support countries as they tackle some extremely complex challenges – the globalization of unhealthy lifestyles spreads with a stunning sweep and speed, population age, health cost soar, and economic downturn deepens,” he said, encouraging them to continue the fight against the spread of NCDs.

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