

# UNGA Adopts Political Declaration on Antimicrobial Resistance, Discusses Links with SDGs

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## STORY HIGHLIGHTS

During a high-level meeting convened by the President of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on the sidelines of the 71st General Debate, UN Member States adopted a political declaration on antimicrobial resistance (AMR).

They also called for action, and outlined initiatives carried out nationally to address AMR.

21 September 2016: During a high-level meeting convened by the President of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) on the sidelines of the 71st General Debate, UN



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The ‘Political Declaration of the High-Level Meeting of the UNGA on Antimicrobial Resistance’ recognizes that prevention and control of infections in humans and animals are the key to tackling AMR. It also calls for: innovative research and development; affordable and accessible antimicrobial medicines and vaccines; improved surveillance and monitoring; and increased international cooperation to control and prevent AMR. Consultations that led to the adoption of the political declaration were facilitated by Juan José Gómez Camacho, Permanent Representative of Mexico.

Opening the meeting on 21 September 2016, Peter Thomson, UNGA President, said AMR could cost trillions of dollars to address. He added that healthy lives and well-being for all is not only related to Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages), but is also a prerequisite to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development as a whole.

UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon remarked that AMR poses a fundamental, long-term threat not only to human health, but also to sustainable food production and development in all parts of the world. He reported that: more than 200,000 newborn children are estimated to die each year from infections that do not respond to available antibiotics; an epidemic of multidrug-resistant typhoid is sweeping across parts of Africa; resistance to HIV/AIDS drugs is on the rise; and “dangerous new genetic mechanisms” for the spread of resistance are emerging and spreading quickly throughout the world. He said if not addressed quickly and comprehensively, AMR will make providing high quality universal health coverage more difficult, if not impossible, will undermine sustainable food production, and will jeopardize the SDGs.

Noting that the AMR is a global crisis compared by some scientists to “a slow-



2015, and highlighted the important role played by consumers. José Graziano da Silva, Director-General, Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), outlined the ‘Action Plan on Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) 2016-2020’ launched recently by FAO, and stressed the importance of multi-dimensional responses, especially in countries where monitoring systems are weak and inadequate.

Monique Eloit, Director General, World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), said OIE has developed international standards on AMR, but these standards, as well as other tools, recommendations and action plans, can only be useful if they are implemented and if they create lasting change in the way antibiotics are used.

Participants highlighted several issues that need further attention in order to address AMR. These include: using antibiotics and antimicrobials “as necessary only;” ensuring equitability of access and affordability of medicine and the use of a “One Health” approach; enhancing collaboration and coordination across levels and sectors; increasing investments in research and development; enacting stronger systems to monitor drug-resistant infections; strengthening AMR regulation; promoting best practices; and fostering innovative approaches using alternatives to antimicrobials.

Many also called for awareness raising and education, with some highlighting the relevance of the World Antibiotics Week that seeks to increase awareness of global antibiotic resistance and to encourage best practices.

In a panel on ‘The Relevance of Addressing AMR for the Achievement of the SDGs, in Particular the Health Related Goals,’ Martin Khor, Executive Director, South Centre, said the AMR crisis “is as serious as climate change, and perhaps even more immediate.” He reported that more than nine million of the ten million people expected to die from AMR by 2050 are in developing countries. He encouraged doctors to use antibiotics in a more targeted way, but said this requires diagnostic tools to avoid “shooting in the dark” by using antibiotics as a guess at treatment.



stressed that AMR should not be portrayed as a security threat, noting that instead, “it is a public health emergency and failure, and a public health responsibility.”

Andrew Witty, CEO, GlaxoSmithKline (GSK), committed to pushing the pharmaceutical industry to implement a road map to develop antibiotics. He said implementation could be encouraged by creating a schedule and targets for action, assigning responsibility and accountability, and publishing that plan.

On actions taken to tackle AMR, many countries (such as Macedonia, Switzerland and the US) said they have developed national action plans, based on the Global Action Plan on AMR.

Switzerland noted that it joined the Global Health Security Agenda initiative, launched by the US in the fight against communicable diseases, has adopted a national research program on AMR in the amount of 20 million Swiss francs, and has published a comparative study seeking to identify best practices to fight AMR at the national level. He announced Switzerland’s commitment to contribute financially to the implementation of the ‘Global Antibiotic Research and Development (GARD)’ partnership launched by the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi).

The US said over two million illnesses and 23,000 deaths are related to antibiotic resistant bacteria every year in her country. She noted that a progress report on the first year of implementation of the US National Action Plan for Combating Antibiotic-Resistant Bacteria was recently finalized, and the US is putting forward new diagnostic tests to rapidly identify and characterize resistant bacteria.

Argentina reported that it has a National Commission to combat AMR and a programme to study the prevalence of the use of antimicrobial medication. The EU noted it has banned antibiotics as growth promoters, and called for cooperation to make this global. [[Meeting Website](#)] [[Political Declaration](#)] [[IISD RS Story on Political Declaration](#)] [[UNGA President’s Opening Statement](#)] [[UN Secretary-](#)



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Means of Implementation, Capacity Building & Education

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FAO, WHO, EU, Stakeholders and Major Groups, Intergovernmental Organization, UN Intergovernmental Body, UN Programme, Agency or Fund, UN Secretariat

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### ACTIONS

Meeting

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Africa, Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, Northern America

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