Alastair White

Dr Nguyễn Thị Kim Tiến

Minister of Health

Government of Vietnam

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Hà Nội, Vietnam

World Heart Federation

Rue de Malatrex 32

Geneva, Switzerland

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Dear Dr Nguyễn Thị Kim Tiến,

I am writing on behalf of the World Heart Federation and the RHD community to call on the government of Vietnam to support the proposal of a World Health Assembly Resolution on RHD.

RHD stands for **rheumatic heart disease**, which is a significant health burden in this country. On 01 June 2017, **the Executive Board of the World Health Organization recommended a Resolution on ‘Rheumatic Fever and Rheumatic Heart Disease’** for adoption at the World Health Assembly in May 2018. The government of New Zealand is leading this process, supported by 19 Member States\* and the wider RHD community.

**It is time to tackle RHD**: this preventable disease affects over 33 million people around the world, killing 320,000 each year. RHD affects the world’s most vulnerable communities, and particularly targets women, children and adolescents.

There is a significant burden of RHD in Vietnam. While national data on Vietnam’s burden is limited, the Global Burden of Disease study estimates that RHD caused up to 2,218 deaths in Vietnam in 2015. RHD is very costly to the region; in 2005, the WHO estimated that RHD cost the whole Asia-Pacific Region 4,125 million DALYs (disability-adjusted life years).[[1]](#footnote-1)

We commend Vietnam’s inclusion of an ambitious goal to reduce by 5-10% the number of patients with RHD in its 2002-2010 national NCD plan.[[2]](#footnote-2) We call upon the government of Vietnam to continue providing leadership in this area and support the forthcoming RHD resolution proposal at the WHO Executive Board. Addressing RHD through a global policy Resolution would save time and money as well as many lives around the world.

We offer our full support to the government of Vietnam in our shared efforts to reduce the burden of RHD. This disease can have a devastating impact on the lives of those it affects, yet is completely preventable through adequate primary care.

Therefore, we urge you, your government and your fellow decision-makers to recognise RHD as a priority. **We respectfully ask that you will support the proposed global Resolution on ‘Rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease’** at the **World Health Assembly in May 2018**. This global policy provides an opportunity to champion this issue and mandate WHO to provide further technical support and guidance on RHD to all countries.

We are keen to discuss this important issue further and can be contacted at resolution@rhdaction.org. We offer our full support to your efforts to address RHD and remain at your service.

With best wishes,

Alastair White

World Heart Federation

\*The 20 Member States co-sponsoring the Resolution are: Australia, Brazil, Burundi, Canada, Colombia, Cook Islands, Ecuador, Fiji, Japan, Kenya, Namibia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Samoa, South Africa, Thailand, Tonga, Tuvalu, Uganda, and Zambia.

1. <http://www.wpro.who.int/health_research/documents/dhs_hr_health_in_asia_and_the_pacific_13_chapter_8_priority_noncommunicable_diseases_and_disorders.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. <http://www.wpro.who.int/vietnam/topics/chronic_diseases/vietnam_noncommunicable_disease_prevention_and_control_program_2002_2010_imple_review.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)