

WHF Statement on Agenda Item 12.8 – Rheumatic Fever and Rheumatic Heart Disease

Honourable Chair, distinguished delegates.

The World Heart Federation, supported by RHD Action and our many partners in rheumatic heart disease, thanks the Secretariat for its report, and thanks Member States for the draft Resolution.

We commend WHO for its spirit and leadership in proposing a ‘coordinated global response’ to RHD. As the report notes, a previous global programme to prevent and control RHD was led by WHO from 1984 – 2000, with impressive results for quality of care and reductions in prevalence.

Despite this the programme was not continued, and we urge the global health community not to let this happen again until RHD is eliminated.

We therefore ask the Secretariat to sustain the proposed intersectoral approach, and draw on the best minds from across WHO, civil society, and health ministries to stimulate this ambitious agenda.

To Member States, we encourage you to embrace the recommendations proposed in the report and draft Resolution, in particular to embed RHD programmes within national health structures, mobilize resources, and address the known determinants of rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease.

RHD is prevalent in every Region of the world, affecting over 33 million people. This disease is ‘everyone’s problem’. We thank those Member States who have already shown leadership on RHD, and encourage others to step up to the challenge.

Civil society is ready to play its part. We welcome suggestions from WHO and Member States on how we can best support the report’s recommendations, and are ready to contribute our skills and resources to the 3 action areas assigned to us in the draft Resolution.

Further, we recognize that people living with RHD, and those working on the front-lines of prevention and control, should be involved in the planning and execution of the global RHD response: we are willing and able to facilitate this.

Looking ahead, we are ready to support the monitoring and evaluation of the proposed ‘global response’ to RHD. Strong goals and targets will be needed to tackle RHD in a timely and meaningful way. We look forward to working with stakeholders to track progress on this important issue.

Thank you for your attention.