World Dental Federation faults WHO plans on noncommunicable diseases

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GENEVA, Switzerland: The FDI World Dental Federation has issued concerns about a number of action documents recently made public by the World Health Organization with regard to non-communicable diseases (NCDs). In a statement released on its website, the dentists’ organisation criticised the documents for not paying sufficient attention to oral diseases, which it says should be classified as a key NCD by the WHO, along with cancer, diabetes, as well as cardiovascular and respiratory diseases.

In a circular note, the FDI also called upon its members to contact their respective national health officials immediately to ensure that the issue of oral health will be included in the upcoming WHO consultations on the plan, as well as the organisation’s next executive board meeting in January. According to the WHO sources, the draft is to be discussed during an informal consultation in Geneva in early November, which will involve member states and several UN agencies.

Published on 12 October, the paper “Global action plan for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases 2013–2020” identifies the threat of NCDs to achieving health-related development goals in low- and middle-income countries and provides recommendations on addressing the situation over the next seven years.

NCDs currently account for 36 million deaths worldwide each year with the majority to be occurring in less developed countries, according to Geneva-based organisation.

While admitting to current constraints of the WHO, the FDI said in its statement that the leadership role of the WHO is essential to keeping oral health a priority in the fight against NCDs. It stated that it had addressed a formal request to the organisation for the inclusion of oral health in its next general programme of work, which will determine the WHO’s expenditure and goals over the next five to six years.

“WHO recognition of oral disease is essential to support and consolidate the significant role the dental profession plays in the prevention and control of NCDs,” FDI President Orlando Monteiro da Silva told Dental Tribune. “WHO is a governmental organization so, while FDI can monitor and advise, governments alone are in a position to change WHO strategy and policy. That is why we are calling upon our member dental associations to contact their national government and ensure the oral health message is communicated within WHO.”