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Editorial

Welcome to the first *ESR Review Special Edition*, part of a series on non-communicable diseases (NCDs) brought to you in collaboration with the Global Center for Legal Innovation on Food Environments at the O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law, Georgetown University Law Center.

NCDs such as hypertension, cardiovascular diseases, diabetes and cancer have been in the spotlight due to Covid-19, as people with these comorbidities are at heightened risk of serious ill-health, disease and death. A major cause of premature death and disability, NCDs are particularly rife in developing countries. Globally, an estimated 41 million people die from NCDs every year, with 80 per cent of deaths occurring in low- and middle-income countries. The rise of NCDs also presents a huge economic burden worldwide due to the cost of management as well as loss of output.

The increasing incidence of NCDs is driven largely by tobacco use, physical inactivity, harmful alcohol consumption and unhealthy diets. Unhealthy diets have garnered much attention, especially for the negative influence of the food industry in sustaining unhealthy food environments. Countries have been urged to take legal, regulatory, and fiscal steps to curtail these activities with a view to creating food environments in which individuals and households can easily access healthy food.

Against this backdrop, our special edition presents contributions focusing on the prevention of diet-related NCDs.

The first article explores NCD prevention through an equitable food system in South Africa, highlighting current opportunities and challenges in this regard. The second provides an interesting perspective on the beverage industry in Mexico, which launched a digital campaign to stop approval of the front-of-package labelling system. The third article explores legal issues around the adoption of simplified nutrition labelling in South Africa, focusing on an analysis of draft regulation R429. The fourth article offers a critique of the National Strategic Plan for the Prevention and Control of NCDs 2022–2027, as part of which it assesses policy priorities for addressing unhealthy diets.

This edition also features an interview with Dr Vicki Pinkney-Atkinson, Director of the South African Non-Communicable Disease Alliance (SANCDAs), who provides insight into the state of NCDs in the country. In the updates section, we share observations on the complaint SANCDAs submitted to the South African Human Rights Commission.

We hope you find this issue stimulating and useful in advocacy for the right to health. We wish to thank the anonymous peer reviewers and our guest authors for their insightful contributions.

*Aisosa Jennifer Omoruyi
and Paula Knipe*

Guest Editors