

STATEMENT

from The Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD)

UN Member States pledge to increase access to diagnosis and inhaled medicines for the 480 million people living with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease(COPD)

Fourth High-level Meeting of the UN General Assembly on the prevention and control of NCDs and the promotion of mental health and wellbeing

UN General Assembly

25 September 2025

The Global Initiative for Chronic Obstructive Lung Disease (GOLD) congratulates UN Member States for recognizing that chronic obstructive pulmonary disease(COPD) is a major cause of disability and death requiring urgent action and welcomes the call for increased access to diagnosis and inhaled medicines included in the Political Declaration.

480 million people live with COPD, and 3.7 million die each year. COPD is the third commonest cause of death globally. It also creates massive economic costs and a recent study estimated that the global economic burden from COPD will amount to \$US40 trillion by 2050.

Inhaled medicines reduce these health and economic costs. But currently the long-acting inhaled bronchodilators needed to treat COPD are available and affordable in just 7% of pharmacies and 4% of hospitals in low- and middle-income countries (LMICS).

Professor David Halpin, from GOLD, who led the campaign on behalf of the Forum of International Respiratory Societies (FIRS) to get the burden of COPD and the need for better access to diagnosis and management included in the Political Declaration commented:

The 4th High-level UN Meeting ends the era of neglect for chronic respiratory diseases. Governments have listened to our arguments and responded. The burden of COPD is enormous and will inevitably rise further over the next decades particularly in low- and middle-income countries. Governments must now work to implement the declaration and ensure access to affordable inhaled medicines to manage COPD and end the neglect of this common disease.

Professor Alvar Agusti, Chair of the GOLD Board of directors commented:

For many years COPD was considered a self-inflicted disease caused by smoking. We now know that in many cases, COPD has other causes, including poor development of the lungs in childhood, air pollution and occupational exposures. The recognition of the burden of COPD by the UN, and the call for improved diagnosis is a huge step forward.