



A million voices against cancer

→ Kathy Redmond ■ EDITOR

This September, for only the second time in its history, the United Nations General Assembly will hold a Special Session focused on health. World leaders will gather to discuss the global challenge posed by non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and agree on concise, action-oriented solutions. For those of us concerned about the rapidly growing toll of death and suffering from cancer worldwide, it represents an opportunity that we cannot afford to miss.

Chronic diseases, including cancer, kill more than twice as many people as all infectious diseases, maternal and childhood conditions and nutritional deficiencies combined. They are on the rise, with the largest increases happening in low- and middle-income countries, which are ill equipped to cope with the human and economic toll.

Yet less than 1% of global funding for health goes to support low- and middle-income countries tackle NCDs. One reason is that funds from the biggest global health donors are often linked to the Millennium Development Goals, which don't even mention chronic diseases. Securing a Special UN Session on this topic represents a huge victory for the alliance of international NCD civil society groups, providing a crucial platform to raise awareness about the scope of the problem and force world leaders to focus on identifying workable solutions. Civil society groups will be consulted before the Summit and they will be represented at the Summit. This means that the cancer com-

munity will have a voice and can help shape what comes out of it. Individuals, institutions or groups that want to help put NCDs on the global health agenda can visit ncdalliance.org to see how to get involved.

The Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) – the lead cancer organisation within the NCD Alliance – aims to gather one million World Cancer Declaration signatures to present to world leaders at the Summit. Cancer organisations across the world are calling on their members to add their names to send a forceful message to governments and international health policy makers about the cancer community's commitment to take action to stem the tide of cancer. The Maximise Life Global Cancer Campaign initiative, run by the Max Foundation global patient advocacy group, has already secured 13,000 signatures from people in almost 90 countries, showing what can be achieved. In Europe, ESO is joining with other organisations, including ECCO and the European Society for Medical Oncology, to call on everyone who cares about cancer to sign the Declaration.

The World Cancer Declaration details key, affordable actions any country can take that could significantly reduce death and suffering from cancer in a relatively short period of time. We have a unique opportunity to help make sure the global health community gets behind this Declaration and puts cancer at the top of the agenda, where it belongs. So get online at www.worldcancerday.org and make your voice heard!