World Health Day 2002 stimulated a global debate on the shift in the global burden of disease and the factors that are fuelling this process of change. In most parts of the world, noncommunicable diseases have become a major epidemic. This is due, in part, to a rapid change in lifestyles leading to reduced physical activity, changing diets and increased tobacco use. This trend is present in all societies, rich and poor, developed and developing.

To draw the attention of policy-makers, the public health community and civil society to these issues, World Health Day 2002 emphasized the importance of fitness and a healthy lifestyle.

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