Integrated approach to fighting these diseases together at the primary care level. Furthermore, the international community is already laying the groundwork to address this looming threat.

On June 8, the UN General Assembly affirmed the need to create integrated public health services and programmes combating NCDs as part of the fight against HIV/AIDS, and recognised that NCDs, like communicable diseases, present a major obstacle to sustainable development.

The holistic approach outlined in the UN declaration provides a framework for action, but to reality it is just the first step—and success will depend on taking an even broader view of the problem.

While it's natural enough to conceive of these efforts in purely medical terms, many of the most pressing tasks exist at the functional, bureaucratic level. A key priority here is encouraging greater collaboration between groups dedicated to fighting HIV, TB and NCDs, bringing policymakers, clinicians, scientists, and advocates together in multidisciplinary teams to formulate the multifacted responses we need.

The potential payoff is enormous in the form of improved health outcomes for tens of millions of people around the world.

With public health leaders set to gather for the International AIDS Conference in Durban, we have an ideal opportunity to begin uniting our efforts to tackle what may well be the most serious public health challenge of the 21st century. Let's seize it together.

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