

Informal briefing on the Mid-term Review of the United Nations Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025)

Mission Focal Points Geneva Thursday, 19 March 2020, from 12.00 to 13.30 WebEx Meeting

Summary

This briefing, was organized by the joint FAO/WHO Secretariat of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025), to discuss with Mission Focal Points in Geneva the achievements in individual policy areas of the Framework for Action, one of the outcome documents of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), as reflected in the Action Areas of the Nutrition Decade's Work Programme over the time period from 2016 to 2020, and to outline potential focus areas for priority action during the second phase of the Nutrition Decade. Future opportunities for new priorities and commitments for action were suggested to help reverse the current trends in malnutrition in all its forms at national, regional and global level, in support of countries achieving the global nutrition targets by 2025 and the nutrition-related targets of the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. The agenda included presentations on the Mid-term Review by the joint FAO/WHO Nutrition Decade Secretariat and on the upcoming Nutrition for Growth Summit by the Representative from the Japanese Mission to the International Organizations in Geneva. Remarks were provided by the Global Coordinator of the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement. In the question and answer session, Member State Representatives were given an opportunity to comment and ask questions.

Welcome & Keynote Address By Dr. Naoko Yamamoto Assistant Director General, World Health Organization

Dr. Naoko Yamamoto gave a brief introduction to the Mid Term Review of the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition, and an overview about the current nutrition situation in the world concluding that the world is off track to achieve the global nutrition targets. She explained that unhealthy diets are the leading cause of death and disability and that better nutrition would also help tackle epidemics such as the current Corona virus pandemic. She stated that the purpose of the briefing was to reflect with Member States on the progress made in implementing the Nutrition Decade's Work Programme, and on the way forward to achieve its goals. The Mid-term Review of the Nutrition Decade is the time to renew the global commitments made at the ICN2 in 2014 with the aim to end all forms of malnutrition and to transform food systems to deliver safe and healthy diets that are sustainably produced. She explained that several forthcoming high level opportunities can help to turn the current trends by setting new priorities and commitments to act. These include the Nutrition for Growth Summit in

Japan and the UN Food Systems Summit in 2021. On behalf of WHO, Member States were thanked for participating in the event and the joint FAO/WHO Nutrition Decade Secretariat looked forward to their contributions to the open and consultative process on the Mid-term Review of the Nutrition Decade.

The progress made and outlook into future priorities by the joint FAO/WHO Nutrition Decade Secretariat

Dr. Francesco Branca, Director Nutrition and Food Safety, WHO, briefly introduced the Mid-term Review process of the Nutrition Decade and its objectives to the participants.

Presentations by Panellists

1. Summary of achievements over the period from 2016 to 2020 by Dr. Anna Lartey, Director Nutrition and Food Systems Division, FAO

Dr. Anna Lartey summarised that the Nutrition Decade's Work Programme covers six cross-cutting Action Areas. She stated that several country-led Action Networks, an important implementation mechanism under the Nutrition Decade, have been set up in the last five years. The progress made in the six Action Areas was summarized as follows: Action Area 1 – Sustainable, resilient food systems for healthy diets: She referred to the advanced process of developing the voluntary guidelines on food systems for nutrition by the Committee on World Food Security (CFS VG) and the proclamation of World Food Safety Day in 2018 since sustainable food systems cannot exist without safe food. Action Area 2 - Aligned health systems providing universal coverage of essential nutrition actions: She informed the audience that the UN General Assembly has passed its resolution on Universal Healthcare Coverage, which is a key milestone for mainstreaming essential nutrition actions into health systems. Another notable point of progress mentioned is the recently published UN Global Action Plan on child wasting. Action Area 3 - Social protection and nutrition education: She emphasized the need for further improvements such as in school nutrition programmes and social protection programmes. Those implemented in the Western Pacific Region could represent good examples. Action Area 4 - Trade and investment for improved nutrition: The progress highlighted for this area included for example the agreement of the CODEX Alimentarius commission to develop guidance on front-of-pack labelling which is expected to impact international trade policy. Action Area 5 – Safe and supportive environments for nutrition at all ages: The international symposium on the Double Burdens of Malnutrition convened in Vienna in 2018 that advanced this scientific discussion, was highlighted. Action Area 6 - Strengthened governance and accountability for nutrition: She focused on the work of the United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN) and the UN Network for SUN, which are key stakeholders within the Nutrition Decade and play an important role in advancing global nutrition governance. Finally, the increased engagement of non-state stakeholders in the Nutrition Decade including civil society, private sector and the various SUN networks were underlined as a key point for increased future progress.

2. Summary of suggested future priorities for the period from 2021 to 2025 by Dr Francesco Branca, Director Nutrition and Food Safety, WHO

Dr. Francesco Branca outlined potential opportunities to accelerate progress in fighting malnutrition in all its forms over the next 5 years including through increased investments and new partnerships. **Action Area 1:** He emphasized the role of crop diversification and the need to invest in expanding the availability of non-staple crops that could contribute to sustainable healthy diets. Moreover, he emphasized the need to ensure that food environments are healthy including the implementation of food safety standards. **Action Area 2:** A key opportunity mentioned was the integration of effective essential nutrition actions into health systems, with adequate health sector budgets and integrated

data systems in place, specifically referencing services to address child wasting. **Action Area 3:** He explained the need for social protection and the role that schools can play not only in school feeding but also in raising awareness and training of health professionals on the importance of nutrition. Advancing the implementation of nutrition labelling tools on packaged food products for consumer education were identified as a key opportunity. **Action Area 4:** The importance of trade decisions that consider nutrition and improve availability and affordability of foods that support healthy diets was highlighted. **Action Area 5:** He emphasised the opportunities to improve food provided in public institutions, and introduce regulatory approaches for food pricing and enabling affordable healthy diets, pointing to the CFS VG. **Action Area 6:** He reminded participants of the importance of involving all stakeholders. Major cross-cutting issues were stressed including introducing more partnerships, building national capacity and data systems to include nutrition indicators, and addressing the nutrition finance and implementation gap.

3. UNSCN presentation on the Upcoming E-Consultation by Ms. Stineke Oenema, Global Coordinator United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN)

Ms Stineke Oenema announced that the UNSCN will host an E-consultation in the coming months in support of the Nutrition Decade and its Mid-term Review, which will give all stakeholders the opportunity to contribute. The contributions would be valuable inputs to revising the current Nutrition Decade's Work Programme. She finally emphasised the linkages with and need to interact with other UN Decades.

4. Keynote Address on the forthcoming Nutrition for Growth (N4G) Summit by HE Mr. Masashi Nakagome, Minister of the Permanent Mission of Japan to the International Organizations in Geneva

HE Masashi Nakagome explained that the N4G Summit will address the global nutrition challenges together with multiple stakeholders to find a way forward in various areas of nutrition, with a focus on the Double Burdens of Malnutrition. He outlined that the five core areas of the N4G Summit would be: *health* led by WHO; *food systems* led by FAO; *resilience*; *data driven accountability*; and *financing* led by the World Bank. As the N4G Summit will promote SMART commitments for action, he encouraged active participation by countries and welcomed that WHO with its country offices supports countries in this ambition.

5. Comment from the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement by Ms. Gerda Verburg, Global Coordinator Scaling Up Nutrition Movement and UN Assistant Secretary General

Ms Gerda Verburg summarised the SUN Movement's contribution to achieving the aims of the Nutrition Decade. She stated that at the N4G Summit and beyond, we must bring together nutrition, health, food systems, fragility, climate change and resilience, hold countries to account, and identify new innovative financing mechanisms. She said that developing countries and nutrition should not need to front the cost of COVID-19. She emphasized that the SUN Movement works with all countries to create commitments based on their national context, supporting countries in making bold, ambitious and SMART commitments. To address the siloed approach, Ms Verburg encouraged multiple sectors to come together using UN teams, donor teams, civil society and SUN business teams at country level to make commitments at the N4G Summit. She referred to the Food Systems Summit 2021 as another important opportunity. She explained that local plans should be developed to strengthen focus on implementation. Ms Verburg concluded that the SUN Movement will contribute to the commitment making process at the N4G Summit as well as at the Food Systems Summit in 2021.

Discussion

The discussion highlighted the importance of collaboration among all stakeholders for future progress. Since the proclamation of the Nutrition Decade in 2016, mechanisms for this have been clarified through a number of dialogues, particularly relating to how public interest can be prioritized. Dr. Branca referred to dialogues that WHO has had with the private sector on food product reformulation for the elimination of trans fats, the reduction of sodium and sugar in processed food products, as well as on consumer information on unhealthy food items, and making healthy food items more available and affordable. Furthermore, it was emphasized that more clarity is needed on the implications of gender equality in each of the six Action Areas of the Nutrition Decade, for investments to contribute to women's' empowerment and the SDG targets. It was clarified that healthy food environments are an important element of food systems regarding the interaction between the consumer and food, playing a key role in ensuring access and affordability to foods that support a healthy diet and promote health and wellbeing.

Dr. Lartey informed the audience that FAO will hold a similar briefing for Member State Representatives in Rome. Ms Verburg commended WHO and others who are active in fighting COVID-19 and called all Member States not to let the crisis impact investment and commitments for the implementation of the SDG Agenda.

Closing Remarks

Dr. Naoko Yamamoto thanked the panellists and speakers for their contribution stating that Member States can access more information via the website and send comments to the WHO Secretariat. She emphasised the role of nutrition in relation to young malnourished children with COVID-19. She called all stakeholders to solidarity. The event was closed with the promise of future dialogue. Dr. Naoko Yamamoto thanked everyone for their participation.



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Agenda

12.00 – 12.05 **Welcome by WHO**

Dr Naoko Yamamoto, Assistant Director-General, UHC/Healthier Populations Division, WHO

12.05 – 12.35 Presentation of the progress made and outlook into future priorities by the joint FAO/WHO Nutrition Decade Secretariat

- Summary of achievements over the period from 2016 to 2020 by Dr Anna Lartey, Director, Nutrition and Food Systems Division, FAO
- Summary of suggested future priorities for the period from 2021 to 2025 by Dr Francesco Branca, Director, Nutrition and Food Safety Department, WHO

12.35 – 13.05 **Question and Answer** (moderated by Dr Naoko Yamamoto, ADG, UHC/HEP, WHO)

Member States are invited to send questions or provide comments on the mid-term review and plans for future action by email

13.05 – 13.25 Forthcoming Nutrition for Growth Summit 2020

- Keynote Address by H.E. Masashi Nakagome, Minister of the Permanent Mission of Japan to the International Organizations in Geneva
- Comment from the Scaling Up Nutrition Movement by Ms Gerda Verburg, Global Coordinator Scaling Up Nutrition Movement and UN Assistant Secretary General

13.25 - 13.30 Closing

Dr Naoko Yamamoto, Assistant Director-General, UHC/Healthier Populations Division, WHO