

Written statement submitted by World Cancer Research Fund International, and on behalf of organisations concerned with nutrition and non-communicable diseases: European Federation of the Associations of Dietitians, European Heart Network, European Public Health Alliance, International Association for the Study of Obesity and the International Diabetes Federation-Europe.

Statement on Nutrition and NCDs to the 63rd WHO Regional Committee for Europe – responding to agenda item 5g (iii)

This statement focuses on the outcomes of the WHO Europe Ministerial Conference on Nutrition and Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) held in Vienna this July, which resulted in the signing of the Vienna Declaration. It also looks forward to the development of a renewed Food and Nutrition Action Plan for Europe, as envisaged in the Vienna Declaration.

The commitment to a renewed Food and Nutrition Action Plan demonstrates willingness on the part of Member States to build on previous work within the European region and also to honour the global commitments made in the United Nations Political Declaration, the recently agreed set of global targets and the WHO Global Action Plan on the Prevention and Control of NCDs. We urge Member States in Izmir to mandate the development of a Food and Nutrition Action Plan.

On the occasion of the 63rd Regional Committee, we use this platform to communicate some of our key recommendations to Member States so as to support the establishment of a clear, comprehensive and ambitious roadmap for food and nutrition policy in Europe. As civil society organisations, we have reflected upon the language in the Vienna Declaration and, in the spirit of achieving the best possible health outcomes for all, we propose the following recommendations to ensure the Food and Nutrition Action Plan is world-leading:

One: Ensure a healthier media environment for our children

As a priority, Member States should commit to fully implement the WHO Set of Recommendations on the Marketing of Foods and Non-Alcoholic Beverages to Children in order to protect children from the harmful and misleading effects of food and beverage marketing in all its forms. The evidence on the impact of children's exposure to such marketing is extensive. We also have

good emerging evidence on the effectiveness of different approaches to reducing children's overall exposure to marketing.

In line with Paragraph 12 of the Vienna Declaration, any future Food and Nutrition Action Plan should encourage, and provide Member States with clear guidance on, the development, implementation and monitoring of comprehensive policies to restrict advertising and other forms of commercial promotion of unhealthy foods and beverages to children in all media. Clear consideration should be given to the design of policies to ensure they are as effective as possible at achieving the public health objective of reducing exposure to marketing of unhealthy products. The Action Plan should provide advice on appropriate government oversight, the use of law as an effective tool, and nutrient profiling as means of identifying unhealthy products.

Two: Create the right conditions for a healthy start

Achieving a healthy start – where no child is left behind – is one of the most important ways to equip our populations with the tools and habits to maintain a healthy weight throughout life.

The Food and Nutrition Action Plan should provide guidance on policies for the protection, promotion and support of exclusive breastfeeding at least up to six months to ensure optimal growth, in line with existing WHO guidance and the International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes.

School settings should also promote healthy lifestyles and the creation and maintenance of healthy preferences. In line with Paragraph 12 of the Vienna Declaration, the Food and Nutrition Action Plan should encourage and provide Member States with guidance on the development, implementation and monitoring of policies in school settings that establish standards for the nutritional quality of food and drinks available and/

or provided by schools, including restrictions on the provision of foods high in fats, salt and sugar that do not promote health. The Action Plan should also provide guidance on other effective measures, including the provision of fresh fruit and vegetables and the inclusion of food preparation and nutrition skills on school curricula.

Three: Improve the quality of the food supply

Healthy diets and nutrition should be key objectives for the functioning of the food systems as the availability, affordability and acceptability of different foods are critical factors in determining people's diets. It is essential that governments introduce measures that encourage and incentivise the agricultural sector, including primary producers, as well as food processors, manufacturers and retailers, to produce, distribute and sell a healthier food supply that is accessible to all.

In line with Paragraphs 5 and 12 of the Vienna Declaration, the Food and Nutrition Action Plan should encourage and provide Member States with guidance on the development, implementation and monitoring of policies to improve the quality of the food supply, including through food product reformulation, reducing the energy density and portion size of processed foods, and supply chain incentives for the production of healthier foods. The Action Plan must acknowledge that achieving nutrition-sensitive food systems will require prioritising health in governance processes, with a focus on multi-sectoral action from farm to fork. This may include the use of targeted economic tools (e.g. taxes and subsidies) along the supply chain so as to influence consumption, but also incentivise the production and retail of healthier products and disincentivise the production and promotion of unhealthy foods.

Finally, as a cross-cutting principle with important implications for all of the above recommendations and in full agreement with the right to food as enshrined in various UN resolutions, we urge Member States to recognise and account for the persistent and growing concerns of poverty, inequality and social exclusion in the new Food and Nutrition Action Plan.

We express our appreciation for your attention and continued commitment to nutrition and the prevention of NCDs. Please be assured of the overwhelming support among civil society organisations for advancing food and nutrition policy in Europe through the wider implementation of effective policies.