

Response to the publication of the report of the WHO Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity

January 2015

World Obesity welcomes the latest guidance on tackling childhood obesity, published by the WHO's Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity (25th January 2016). The report provides clear guidance to member states on the action that is required to tackle childhood obesity, with a focus on promoting the intake of healthy foods and physical activity throughout childhood and adolescence, preconception and pregnancy care and weight management treatment options. We particularly welcome the emphasis on the need for regulatory policy actions to address obesogenic environments, the need for action throughout the life course and the emphasis on strong government leadership to implement strong measures which have been shown to have an impact.

This report is of particular importance because, in less than a generation, rates of child obesity have risen dramatically worldwide. For example, in the USA children weigh on average 5kg more than they did 30 years ago, and one in three children is now overweight or obese, and the last decade has seen many developing economies rapidly catching up [1]. Although child obesity rates have started to level off in some cities and countries, no country to date has experienced declining rates of obesity across its population, and in many developing economies the rates are climbing rapidly.

As recognised in the report, a wide number of actions will be needed if we are to see a halt and reduction in the levels of overweight and obesity amongst children, including interventions in markets to prevent national dietary guidelines being undermined by commercial interests. A strong set of regulatory actions covering the full range of these policy interventions will be necessary for progress, and we urge Member States to consider a framework convention as an opportunity to protect and promote healthy, equitable and sustainable food systems. This could use a similar mechanism to the Framework Convention for Tobacco Control which has already proved successful in reducing tobacco use. Such a convention would need to be developed by the World Health Organization and governments without the influence of commercial interests.

[1] Lobstein T, Jackson-Leach R, Moodie ML, Hall KD, Gortmaker SL, Swinburn BA, James WP, Wang Y, McPherson K. Child and adolescent obesity: part of a bigger picture. *Lancet*. 2015 Jun 20;385(9986):2510-20.

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The Report of the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity is available to download here: http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/10665/204176/1/9789241510066_eng.pdf?ua=1

Further information about the Commission can be found here: <http://www.who.int/ending-childhood-obesity/about/en/>

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