

Czech Republic – statement of the Head of the delegation at ICN2 – Mr. Vladimír Valenta, Deputy Minister of Health, Rome 19th November 2014.

Honourable Chair,

Ministers, Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen¹,

Let me express my gratitude and thanks for the organisation of this international forum. Especially, I would like to thank the Italian colleagues and members of the open-ended working group for the intensive preparation works.

Certainly even 20 years after the last global conference on nutrition the question of nutrition and food sufficiency remains a topic of great importance and a major concern. This is evident especially in various crisis situations, both in the duration of the crisis and in its aftermath. A clear example today is the crisis of ebola outbreak. The Czech Republic appreciates the efforts of the Food and Agriculture Organization and the Rome based United Nations agencies for sustaining agricultural production in the areas affected by ebola and their fight against the food crisis. I would also like to emphasize the activities of the World Health Organization in tackling the crisis.

¹ seznam oslovených bude ještě zřejmě upraven podle potřeby

Nutrition is of high importance for the Czech Republic. This holds true not only at home, but also at the global scale. In order to reduce hunger and undernutrition globally, the Czech Republic helps its partner states through development cooperation projects in the agricultural area. Our country is also actively supporting research, food systems development and mapping of the world agricultural trade.

The topic of nutrition enjoys much attention not only from the state administration and experts, but also from lay public and media in the Czech Republic. Nutritional policies are anchored in several strategic documents adopted and evaluated by the government. I can mention for example the national strategy Health 2020, which deals in great detail with the quality of nutrition. This Strategy is also one example of Czech national implementation of the WHO strategies. Our government also puts much importance in communicating the issues of nutrition with public.

We in the Czech Republic are very lucky not to have the problem of food insufficiency thanks to the rich agricultural and food history and thanks to the well-developed agri-food sector. This sector, together with the open EU market, ensures consumers access to nutritious, high-quality and available food.

However, eating habits and nutrition quality are a persisting problem. We come across obesity and high intake of nutrients, which causes a number of non-communicable diseases which are the most common cause of illness and death in the Czech Republic and present a major social problem.

To tackle this problem, abiding by the principles of healthy nutrition is the basic requirement for maintaining a good health condition and preventing many diseases. We concentrate especially on infants and small children, pregnant and breastfeeding women and senior citizens. There are many ongoing programs, such as a program on meals provided by schools and their improvement based on the new nutrition requirements.

We also consider food waste and food losses as a complex social, economic and environmental problem. There is a society-wide discussion in the Czech Republic concentrating on this subject. We especially support the collaboration with food banks and non-profit organisations at all levels. We also focus on education campaigns supported by state and non-profit organisations. These campaigns aim at achieving that

consumers examine the quality and origin of food and that they learn how to better manage the food.

Ladies and gentleman, I am convinced that the conclusions of this conference will help the Czech Republic to implement the already outlined goals and reinforce the importance of nutrition at all levels and in all its aspects. In the international context, I wish to emphasize that nutrition and food security has to stay one of the main topics of the post 2015 (twenty-fifteen) development agenda. We consider the conference as a beginning of a long term process that will include the implementation of the accepted pledges. In order to achieve a successful implementation phase, it is necessary to ensure a multi-sectoral approach on the level of countries, the United Nations, but also of other relevant stakeholders. In this manner we emphasise the continuation of collaboration between the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the World Health Organisation.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish you a successful conference and an inspirational encounter with colleagues from all regions.