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Chairperson for Roundtable 2

*Mr. President,
Honourable Madam Director General of WHO,
Honourable Director General of FAO,
Honourable ministers,
Excellences,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

First of all, let me thank the moderators, main speakers and panelists, as well as all distinguished delegates for participating in the discussions within the roundtable 2 called “Improving Policy Coherence for Nutrition”. I particularly thank Mr Tito Pizarro, Head of the Division of Health Public Policies and Promotion of the Ministry of Health of Chile, for his invaluable help in chairing this roundtable.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me summarize the objectives of the 3 panels:

Panel 1 on *Coherence between economic policies and healthy changes in diets* was to assess the challenges and opportunities of creating greater coherence between and among public policies in order to improve nutrition and achieve healthy diets.

The objective of the next panel on *Policy coherence for nutrition-sensitive agriculture* was to provide concrete examples on how agricultural projects, programmes and policies can be designed to be more sensitive to nutritional needs.

Finally, the objective of the last panel on *Nutrition-in-all sectors* was to illustrate the ways in which countries integrate nutrition in various sectors such as agriculture, health, education, trade and social welfare.

The discussions were focused on the current situation, identified, opportunities and provided recommendations. We also considered possible ways to operationalize commitments and turn them into actions.

Many important issues were raised during the discussions around policy coherence for nutrition and achieving healthy diets. Many speakers shared with us their national experiences, both success and failure stories. They raised their concerns about challenges, noted the opportunities and referred to the existing nutrition policies. All voices in the debate were interesting and very accurate.

There is no doubt that policy coherence for nutrition is a challenge. It was clearly indicated by many speakers. Such approach is not free of charge. It is an investment which requires many resources – money, time, strong engagement and a lot of attention. But it is an investment that pays off – once completed, it brings high revenues for generations.

We do not lack knowledge on how to achieve this goal - the paradox is that currently we know enough but we do less than we should. The participants shared with us their national solutions, among others in fiscal policies, education and health programmes, school food schemes, breastfeeding promotion, reformulations or food labelling. This is a knowledge we have to use and let me shortly mention some examples.

We heard about many national experiences in developing and implementing national multisectoral nutrition policies and strategies in coordination with relevant organizations and ministries, civil society and the private sector. These policies focus mainly on family farming or school feeding programmes. Success stories from many countries, like Brazil (with its Zero Hunger Initiative which lifted 36 million Brazilians out of poverty) and Ireland were particularly welcomed and carefully heard. We were also happy to hear that many countries develop legal framework and fiscal policy measures concerning taxes on unhealthy food products, following the experiences of tobacco taxes.

Today we can also confirm that we have the tools, such as food supply and demand value chain analysis which helps to focus on the totality of evidence, activities, actors, and incentives in the food system and can test the assumption of value for nutrition and value for economics.

Unfortunately we can also notice that although different tools were implemented, in many countries growing incidence of overweight, obesity and diet-related non-communicable diseases was still observed. That forces us to take as radical steps as possible to reverse the trends.

In establishing new public policies and strengthening the existing ones we need to increase availability and affordability of nutrition rich foods and diverse diets. Reducing inequalities and shaping the consumer demand is equally important. We also need to select value chains more nutrition-sensitive, for instance by enhancing nutrient content, engaging educator actors, stimulating demand.

In establishing policies we should be focused on the most vulnerable groups: infants and women. National school nutrition programmes and supplemental nutrition for children may serve as a good example of this focused actions.

But there cannot be “one fits all” approach. The policies should also reflect specific national settings and cultural environment.

When we speak about vulnerable groups we have to notice that the special attention during the session was paid to women. Women’s empowerment, including land ownership, is considered as crucial for improving nutrition outcomes. Since women are often primary caregivers, they can directly, through their own nutritional status, influence nutrition of their children and the whole family.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

During our discussion it was underlined that we need to adopt approaches involving all government departments, ensuring that nutrition issues receive an appropriate cross-sectoral response. We

clearly see the need to include nutrition in development cooperation initiatives, economic development policies and poverty-reduction strategies. To get high quality food and strengthen capacity building in its production the close collaboration between health, agriculture and trade sectors is obvious. To raise social awareness and improve health literacy of the society, an active engagement of education sector is vital. Again, children and their parents are crucial target groups.

But the government alone will not do everything.

During the discussion there was also a common agreement that we need to engage all parties and sectors of society, including civil society and the private sector, to generate effective responses to address malnutrition in all its forms. We should not forget that constructive dialogue with all key actors is a prerequisite for common success. This dialogue, however, should be supplemented with necessary regulations, as public health cannot be the hostage of economic profit. Establishing a national accountability frameworks for private sector was one of the ideas we discussed as possible option.

Finally, we cannot forget about international cooperation. For many countries seeking the support through the technical assistance from the UN system, in particular from WHO and FAO, to reinforce and accelerate national efforts to address policy incoherence is often the first choice while introducing legal changes.

All relevant policies should be based on the recommendations included in global instruments, such as WHO Global Strategy on Healthy Diet, Physical Activity and Health, 2011 UN Outcome Document on NCDs, 2014 UN Outcome Document on NCDs or Helsinki Statement on Health-in-All Policies.

Multilateral cooperation in many different formulas is also very needed and we heard a lot how much benefit it brings.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We hope that our strong determination presented during the discussions will bring the expected results in the near future across the countries. Let's hope that during the next ICN we will all share the success stories and not the examples of failure policies.

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I would like to thank one more time to all the participants of the roundtable. I truly believe the outcomes of the discussion will encourage us for taking the necessary actions to improve nutrition and health of the population. After many decades of disinvestment in nutrition, we have an unique opportunity to make the hunger and malnutrition part of the history, not the future. Let's not waste it.

Thank you for your attention.