

South Africa

Statement by Her Excellency Ms Nomatamba Tambo, South Africa's Permanent Representative to the Food and Agriculture Organization, and South Africa's Ambassador to Italy at the Second International Conference on Nutrition, Rome, Italy, 19 -21 October 2014

Your Excellency, Chairperson of the ICN2,
Your Excellency, Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization,
Your Excellency, Director-General of the World Health Organization,
Distinguished Delegates,
Ladies and Gentleman,

Chairperson, allow me first to congratulate you on your election to preside over the Second International Conference on Nutrition. Furthermore, on behalf of the Government of the Republic of South Africa, I would also like to acknowledge the participation in this Conference of His Majesty King Letsie III of the Kingdom of Lesotho and express our highest regard and support for his role as the African Union Nutrition Champion.

South Africa is particularly pleased that this Conference has not only adopted a political declaration, but most importantly also a Framework for Action to guide the implementation of the commitments of the Political Declaration, thus providing a set of policy options and strategies for governments and partners for incorporation into their national nutrition, health, agriculture, human development and investment plans.

Chairperson. South Africa considers adequate nutrition as a basic human right and a prerequisite for the attainment of a person's full intellectual and physical potential. Improving nutrition is thus an ethical imperative, a sound economic investment and a key element of health care at all levels. Malnutrition undermines progress towards attainment of the Millennium Development Goals, the World Food Summit Plan of Action targets, and is likely, if not adequately addressed, to impact on the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals, in particular those goals related to poverty, food security and nutrition, maternal health, child mortality and education.

In South Africa food security and nutrition is a Constitutional mandate, i) **Section 27 (1b)** of the Bill of Rights provides that "every citizen has a right to have access to food and water", ii) **Section 28 (1c)** "every child has the right to basic nutrition, shelter, basic health care and social services", iii) **Section 35 (2e)** determines that "every detained person and sentenced prisoner has a right to adequate nutrition". To mainstream nutrition into its programmes, the South African Government has, through its Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) undertaken to improve the health profile of all South Africans.

To this end, Government has developed a five-year Roadmap for Nutrition for South Africa, which seeks to direct nutrition-related activities in the health sector towards the

achievement of the sector's four focus areas, which are increasing life expectancy; decreasing maternal and child mortality; combating HIV and AIDS and decreasing the burden of disease from Tuberculosis; and strengthening health system effectiveness.

Following the implementation of our 1994 Integrated Nutrition Programme, significant gains were made in the development of specific policies and the implementation of micronutrient strategies. We came to realize, however, that there is also a strong need to focus on priority target groups and interventions that can have the biggest impact, namely in the life-cycle stages before and during pregnancy, and in the first two years of life. And just as this Conference has recognized the importance and need of adopting a Framework for Action to assist member states to develop strategies and programmes, likewise South Africa last year also adopted a Roadmap for Nutrition in South Africa for the period 2013-2017, with our mission being to provide high quality and access to evidence-based nutrition services, particularly for women, infants and children, throughout all levels of the health care system.

Furthermore, we have adopted a **lifecycle approach**, focusing on the key 'window of opportunity', namely pregnancy and the first two years of life (the first 1000 days), as well as following a **Continuum of Care** principle where we deliver nutrition services in an integrated manner by linking community, primary health care and hospital level services. Our interventions must be **Focused and Targeted**; we have set **clear accountabilities at different levels**; there must be **collaboration** among multiple sectors, and, finally, there must be effective **communication** with households and communities, and among all partners and disciplines.

Under the Nutrition Roadmap we have set ourselves five clear goals of contributing to increased life expectancy of the entire population by improving the quality, coverage and intensity of specific nutrition interventions; promoting optimal growth of children and preventing overweight and obesity later in life; contributing to the prevention, control and treatment of HIV and Tuberculosis through targeted nutritional care and support strategies; reducing the demand for curative services, as well as empowering families and communities to make informed nutrition-related decisions through advocacy regarding household food security, multi-sectoral collaboration and effective nutrition education. We also strongly believe that none of this can be achieved by Government alone, which is why we have adopted a multi-stakeholder approach to nutrition that also allows us to draw on the invaluable resources of both civil society and the private sector.

Chairperson. It is very important that when we leave this conference here in Rome, we vigorously follow up on our political commitments and begin drawing on the guidance of the Framework for Action. South Africa strongly believes that every person has the right to adequate food and that such food must also serve good nutrition. We can no longer accept that more than half the world's population remains adversely affected by malnutrition. It is our firm belief that when we meet again at the Third International Conference on Nutrition, the focus will be on the sharing experiences, best practices and successes in nutrition emanating from this conference.

I thank you.