

## Short summary of the web consultation comments on the zero draft of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) political outcome document

A zero draft of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) political outcome document was issued for web consultation from 21 February to 24 March 2014. In total, 99 comments were received from a wide range of stakeholders, representing civil society, Member States, individual academics, the private sector and UN organizations. This document summarises the key messages from the consultation. A more detailed summary of the comments received is provided separately.

### Comments on the process of developing the zero draft

While there was positive feedback about the zero draft process, paying tribute to the broad consultation, there was also some criticism that the process lacked transparency and that real democratic participation was missing. A transparent process for the development of the Framework for Action was urged, with the involvement of civil society, in particular, and an open, transparent mechanism for engaging with the private sector. There was considerable concern that the process appears somewhat back-to-front. That is, that development of a political outcome document should follow from a detailed plan of action, rather than vice versa.

### Terminology

The language in the draft was described as being too vague and inclusion of clear definitions of the concepts (e.g., malnutrition, undernutrition, undernourishment, unbalanced diets, overnutrition, nutritious foods etc.) would be useful.

The inclusion of all forms of malnutrition, including undernutrition and overnutrition, in the document was welcomed. It was suggested, however, that this should be more explicit, with specific mention of overconsumption, excessive intake or obesity and specific mention of wasting. It was suggested that malnutrition should be expressed using physical indicators rather than dietary intakes (e.g., undernutrition (stunting, wasting), micronutrient deficiencies and overweight/obesity).

Better consistency in the use of the term malnutrition throughout the document was suggested; at times malnutrition is used interchangeably with undernutrition. In line with the definition of malnutrition in the document, the term should only be used in the broader sense to refer to both under- and over-nutrition. More care should also be taken to differentiate between terms relating to diet and dietary practices (undernourishment, balanced diets) and to nutritional status (malnutrition, undernutrition, etc.).

### General comments on the draft

There were a number of positive comments about the overall document. The draft was also, however, criticised by some as being unclear, confused and fragmented. A common theme was the need to establish specific commitments, concrete actions and mechanisms for holding Member States accountable. In addition, the paragraphs setting out the current situation (particularly paragraph 2) would be greatly enhanced by the inclusion of more facts and figures, wherever possible. More care should also be taken to ensure a consistent approach to citing such figures – currently a mixture of prevalence rates and absolute numbers is used, thus not always conveying a clear picture of the scale of the problem.

There were numerous comments that the zero draft should be more explicit about how it links with other relevant global initiatives and actions – such as the Global Strategic Framework for Food Security and Nutrition, the maternal, infant and young child nutrition targets agreed at the 2012 World Health Assembly, the Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases 2013-2020, the 1,000 Days initiative and the

Scaling Up Nutrition movement. The failure to live up to the 1992 commitments, and the reasons for this failure, should also be explored in more detail.

A number of key points emerged:

- *Too great a focus on food and agriculture:* There were many comments that the zero draft is too focused on the food and agriculture sectors, with too little attention to nutrition – along with its underlying determinants – and the important role of health and other sectors. Many called for greater attention to issues such as nutrition interventions, family planning, social protection, gender inequality and empowerment of women, health systems and access to health care, water and sanitation, access to education, macro-economics factors, poverty reduction and livelihood improvement, equity and the challenge of inequities, environment, infant and child care practices, intra-household distribution, misuse of resources and corruption, and humanitarian crises (conflict and natural disasters). It was also pointed out that action on malnutrition should incorporate both prevention and treatment; the latter requires increasing coverage of, and access to, treatment for acute malnutrition.
- *Importance of multisectoral action:* Similarly, many comments emphasised the importance of multisectoral action, involving those sectors involved in the issues highlighted above, and the necessity of mechanisms to implement a multisectoral approach. Gaps between the key sectors, such as agriculture and health, still exist and bringing these sectors closer together should be a priority.
- *Broad societal participation:* This multisectoral approach also needs to engage society as a whole. Such an approach renders the process less vulnerable to crises and to political change, and enhances accountability as well as sharing the burden of implementation. Institutional mechanisms, such as a national council for food and nutrition, are needed.
- *Human rights:* There were repeated calls for the draft to include a much stronger human rights perspective and for the right to adequate food and nutrition to be enshrined into this Accord. The human rights approach is important for setting out states' obligations (including their extra-territorial commitments, which means ensuring that trans-national companies do not infringe rights), in establishing people as citizens or rights-holders (rather than simply consumers) and for outlining framework to be respected by private sector actors.
- *Need for commitments, targets and accountability mechanisms:* One of the other major issues, raised by very many commentators, was the need for stronger, specific commitments. Concrete targets, detailed specific actions and a framework for monitoring and accountability are all needed.

Specific comments and suggestions covered a wide range of issues, including – but not restricted to – the examples given below.

More acknowledgement of the importance of macro-economic factors and the role of the financial sector (commodity speculation, price fixing etc.), for example, was urged. A clear statement on the economic impact of malnutrition, for example on gross domestic product (GDP), and the need for major public investment to tackle malnutrition was suggested. It is also important to stress that nutrition is an essential driver of development, and that improving nutrition and eradicating hunger is not only a goal of development, but also a means of achieving it.

There were divergent views on the references to agri-food companies in the draft. Some commentators called for the draft to be more specific about the negative impact of large-scale companies and industrial food production on nutrition. Others were critical of perceived negative attitudes towards food processing and processed food in the draft. Views also differed on the role of the private sector in tackling malnutrition. There were repeated calls for safeguards against conflicts of interest to be established, and some respondents urged great caution towards the involvement of major agricultural and food interests. Other commentators, meanwhile, recommended greater recognition of the important role of the private sector and suggested public-private partnerships should be encouraged.

There was widespread support for the alignment of nutritional and environmental policies and objectives. It was suggested that the draft should do more to set out the shared benefits for health, nutrition and the environment of sustainable food production, sustainable consumption and reducing waste. It was suggested that additional specific commitments on climate-resilient food systems and sustainable food systems were needed. The use of the term Climate Smart Agriculture was questioned, with 'climate friendly agriculture' proposed as an alternative.

For a more detailed summary of comments, with paragraph-by-paragraph suggestions for modifications, see the longer version provided separately.

### Comments on the commitments to action

The commitments outlined in the present draft (Paragraph 21) were criticised for being insufficiently clear, too general and not actionable. More specific and more ambitious commitments were called for, and numerous examples were suggested.<sup>1</sup>

As elsewhere in the document, there was concern about the narrow focus on food and agriculture, with five out of seven commitments relating to the food system. A much broader approach is needed to include elements that influence food systems – such as international trade, land ownership and control, monopolistic/oligopolistic practices, tax and incentive policies – and other sectors impacting on nutrition (health, poverty eradication, water and sanitation, education, social protection, gender equality etc.) The commitments should also enshrine the right to adequate food and the right to health.

There were numerous comments about the reference to the leadership role of government and suggestions that there should be a more explicit statement of what this entails. There were differing views as to how this role should be defined – with some suggesting a relatively narrow role, while others proposed a much broader leadership remit.

It was suggested that each commitment should be accompanied by targets and indicators that can be monitored. The commitments should refer to an agreed and accountable action plan, and governments should indicate that they are willing to be held accountable.

There was broad support for a Decade of Action on Nutrition, guided by a Framework for Action. As highlighted previously, many commentators sought more detail on the specifics of that proposed framework.

There was support for alignment of this Accord and the Framework for Action with the post-2015 development agenda. There were suggestions to include a call for food and nutrition security to be included as a stand-alone goal, with relevant targets and indicators, in the post-2015 agenda.

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<sup>1</sup> See longer version of web consultation summary, available in English only.