

SECOND INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON NUTRITION (ICN2)
STATEMENT BY THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH
LEADER OF THE GHANA DELEGATION – HONOURABLE KWAKU
AGYEMANG-MENSAH

Thank you Mr. Chairman for giving us the Floor. We bring you and all distinguished delegates, warm greetings from Ghana.

The Ghana Delegation is pleased to be part of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), bearing in mind that Ghana chaired the preparatory Session of the first International Conference held in 1992, and presided over the Inaugural Ceremony of the Conference. The Ghana delegation views its participation in this historic second Conference as a continuation of the work initiated in 1992.

We thank the FAO and the WHO for their initiative, commitment and support for tackling malnutrition and food insecurity. We also thank the joint Secretariat for all the hard work done in putting the various documents together.

We believe that the nature of the challenge that confronts us requires far reaching policies that cut across different sectors such as education, agriculture, trade and industry and health in order to make a headway especially in developing countries.

We take note of the fact that the problem of malnutrition in our part of the world continues to be a struggle that has not gained the required attention at the political level as well as the technical level in many developing countries. First of all, we recognize that this is a multifaceted problem that will not go away easily with the application of medical science alone.

Indeed the control of this problem falls largely outside the confines of hospitals and clinics. Food availability and utilization, water and sanitation, Education and knowledge on nutrition, play a significant role in our attempt to improve diet and reduce the incidence of malnutrition in all its forms.

We also recognise the fact that the problem is prevalent in our part of the world, and this alone warrants a positive action from those of us who are charged with the responsibility of ensuring food security and protecting the health of our nations.

In Ghana, even though we have made some progress since the last conference, our statistics show that over 23% of our children remain stunted. These children will grow up to be stunted adults with reduced physical capacity and productivity. The prevalence of anaemia has remained persistently high with 57% of preschool children and 59% of women of child bearing age being anaemic.

It has been estimated that if the present levels of malnutrition are not reduced within the next five years in the 0 to 59 month old children, moderate to severe malnutrition will account for over 200,000 child deaths. Sub optimal feeding will account for 14% of all acute respiratory infections and 23% of all diarrhoea cases.

In economic terms, it has been estimated that Ghana will lose nearly US\$633 million over the next ten years in future economic production as a direct result of poor nutrition and anaemia among workers. Stunting will cost us about US\$1.6billion as a result of decreased worker productivity and iodine deficiency will cost us US\$318million due to decreased mental ability.

Ghana acknowledges the Multiple challenges of malnutrition to inclusive and sustainable development, and shares the common vision for global action to end all forms of malnutrition.

The Government of Ghana, under the current leadership is therefore committed to reversing the negative trends in malnutrition.

Moving forward, we would scale up investment in proven effective nutrition interventions we are currently implementing. We expect that reducing iodine deficiency will help in preventing permanent brain damage in 500,000 children and increase the average child's Intelligence Quotient by 13.5 points.

This will result in earlier school enrolment, children staying in school for longer, and better school performance. We also expect to save 30,000 lives by preventing underweight and over 25,000 lives of children by decreasing vitamin A deficiency

Ghana has demonstrated commitment to reversing the poor nutrition trends by signing on to the "Scaling Up Nutrition Movement" as an Early Riser country and has created the multi-sectorial platform for coordination among sectors.

We have also developed a multi-sectorial Nutrition Policy, encompassing all relevant sectors such as Food and Agriculture, Education, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene, Gender and Social Protection, and the Local Government. This draft policy will soon receive cabinet approval and will be integrated into programs of the relevant sectors.

The Government of Ghana is also committed to adopting the Conference Outcome Documents – The Rome Declaration on Nutrition; and the Framework for Action, and will ensure their integration into national programmes.

Government will continue to provide strong political leadership and commitment at the highest level to ensure a sustained response to the challenge of malnutrition in Ghana.

I thank you