

Second International Conference on Nutrition
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Statement of Dr. Svetlana COTELEA,
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Dear Ms./Mr. Chairman,
Excellences,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is my great honour and pleasure to speak on the occasion of the Second International Conference on Nutrition on behalf of the Republic of Moldova representing the Ministry of Health.

Republic of Moldova is among those countries that currently face the dual burden of malnutrition, ranging from micronutrient deficiencies to increasingly prominent problem of overweight and obesity.

During the last decade, health initiatives aimed at improving nutritional status of the population were focused mainly on micronutrient deficiencies. In Moldova, we eliminate successfully iodine deficiency via salt iodization programme and are committed to maintain the achieved results. As well, supplementation strategy with daily provision of iron and folic acid to pregnant women, as part of antenatal care program, has led to gradual improvement in the nutritional status and birth outcomes. However, one out of four women of reproductive age still is anaemic and almost 20% of children under the age of five still suffer from anaemia. National Programme on Iron and Folic Acid Deficiencies (2012-2017) has set a target to reduce iron deficiency anaemia by 30% in these groups by 2017 and currently, Minister of Health took the leadership to coordinate its proper implementation.

With the nutrient deficiencies still remaining a challenge to be overcome through more robust and sustainable initiatives, our country is facing a rapidly growing problem of overweight and obesity, as well as diet related chronic diseases.

Moldova is an agricultural country and agriculture is one strategic area for the development. Farming lands comprise around 75% of the total area of land and country produces over 800,000 tons of fruits and vegetables per year. At the same time, almost 67% of our population eats less than 5 servings of fruits and vegetables per day and over 55% of population in Moldova is overweight. This demonstrates a strong need to align agriculture and health policies in a better manner, to implement nutrition education programmes and empower people to make informed choices regarding food consumption, to create environment which enable healthy eating practices, to enforce regulatory and voluntary instruments related to marketing, publicity and labelling policies. All these interventions are among the key elements of the National Programme on Food and Nutrition endorsed by the Moldovan Government in 2014 with the aim to strengthen capacities and mobilize resources for better nutrition outcomes.

One specific area under the food and nutrition policies addresses nutrition in schools and pre-school institutions. In order to ensure a healthier environment a ban on selling and serving

obesogenic food has been introduced inside the schools and pre-schools. In addition, food and nutrient-based standards for schools, childcare facilities, as well as hospitals are under development and to be established.

We recognize that nutrition goals can be achieved only through coherent and mutually reinforcing policies across the sectors. National Strategy on Public Health, developed in line with the European policy Health 2020, highlights the importance of applying health in all policies approach and building capacities across sectors. This Strategy has laid the foundations for the integrated approach and provides the framework for addressing intertwined societal challenges, food and nutrition being one of those. Inter-sectorial Coordination Committee led by the deputy Prime-minister includes senior representatives from a range of governmental authorities, as well as civil society and is an example of putting in action the whole of government and whole of society approach.

Indeed, nutrition policies require even more than the synergy across governmental authorities. Food and nutrition is strongly related to practices put in place and promoted by the food industry. We recognize that there is no solution to the nutrition challenges without interaction with and contribution from the private sector. Our previous experience in implementing nutrition programmes has demonstrated that private sector plays an important role in ensuring proper implementation of the initiatives aimed to enable healthy diets. This recognition brings us to the pressing need to actively engage private sector in collaboration for diet-related disease prevention and control. In this respect, the Ministry of Health is committed to stimulate and lead further such type of cooperation.

Today, more than ever, Moldova is firmly committed to its European future. Remarkable progress has been made towards the achievement of the National objective of EU integration over the last period, with the Association Agreement being signed in Brussels in June 2014 and ratified by the European Parliament on November 13. Increasingly close cooperation with the European Union brings about additional engagements, both at the political and societal level. Following aspirations to join the EU, Moldova takes the commitment to European values and European policies that meet the needs of the population. In this regard, we strongly believe that EU approximation will lead also to a future progress in enhancing food systems through the alignment of national legislative frameworks for food safety and quality to European standards.

In conclusion, Republic of Moldova has moved forward in terms of bringing to the national agenda food and nutrition policies for improving nutrition at the country level. At the same time, we recognize the importance of enhancing the commitment to achieve better nutrition for all. In this regard, we firmly declare our support for the Rome Declaration and the related Framework for Action coming to intensify strategic efforts for ensuring sustainable food systems, improving food supply and attaining a better nutrition status of our population, thus contributing to the achievement of global goals on food and nutrition.

Ladies and gentlemen, the last but not the least please allow me to express our deep gratitude to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Health Organization for the remarkable support in advancing food and nutrition strategies at the country level.

Thank you for your attention.