

STATEMENT

BY

COMMISSIONER NEVEN MIMICA

**Second International Conference on Nutrition-
FAO Rome 20th November 2014**

**Distinguished Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Introduction

I am honoured to speak on behalf of the European Union as European Commissioner for international cooperation and development.

The world has changed profoundly since 1992, when the first International Conference on Nutrition was organised in this same building. Technology has progressed at an astonishing speed. The geopolitical map of the planet has changed fast. Ours has become a much more open and interconnected world. And yet here we are again, 22 years later, talking about the same shameful reality: the fact that tens of millions of children will die or suffer lifelong health problems because of undernutrition.

Yes, we have made some headway – the number of stunted children has been decreasing and continues to do so. Still, however, undernutrition affects 161 million children – that’s one-quarter of the world's children. This is an unacceptably high figure; a reality that, in this world of enormous wealth and knowledge, we simply cannot and should not tolerate.

But undernutrition is not only a personal tragedy for those children that will die or not be able to develop their full cognitive and physical capacities. It causes an irreparable loss to society and to the economy. Inclusive growth is simply not compatible with high malnutrition rates.

Aware of the need to urgently address the consequences of undernutrition, the EU has recently

scaled up its efforts and placed itself at the forefront of the global drive to fight this curse.

First, we have committed to an ambitious policy objective: to support partner countries in reducing the number of children with stunting by at least 7 million by 2025. Our nutrition policy framework has been built around this key objective.

Second, to back up this objective with proper funding, we have pledged to allocate 3.5 billion euros to nutrition between now and 2020. In addition, we have recently developed a Nutrition Action Plan setting out our strategic priorities for using these funds.

Let's not forget, however, that fighting malnutrition is not just about mobilising financial resources. It is also about translating political will into policies and impact.

Most of the countries facing a high burden of malnutrition and, in particular a high stunting burden, are present here today. Many have made efforts to raise the profile of nutrition in their health domestic policies. This is encouraging, of course – but it is not enough. In countries where one out of two children is stunted, nutrition must be at the core of the national agenda. Quite simply, it must be a national priority.

Intergovernmental agencies and donors must play their part as well and do more to embed nutrition in their development strategies.

As ever, the European Union is ready to play its part as well. We look forward to building stronger partnerships with all key nutrition players: from donors and partner countries to UN organisations; and from civil society to the private sector. We are

fully aware that we cannot achieve our goals unless we work hand in hand with all of you.

Conclusion

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Be in no doubt as the EU Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development I will fight undernutrition with determination, and to the best of my abilities.

That determination includes providing support to forums like this, where we can openly talk to each other and strengthen our cooperation. I want to thank the FAO and WHO, two of the major players in this fight, for accepting the challenge of convening this Second International Conference on Nutrition. It gives us a unique opportunity to discuss global issues, build partnerships and create together an

enabling political environment to make our campaign to beat malnutrition more effective. And it is the ideal forum at which we can agree on a common vision for what is probably our major political challenge in 2015: ensuring that nutrition is ambitiously addressed in the post-2015 framework.

For proof that this is the place at which we can get things done, we need look no further than its valuable outcomes. These important milestones include notably the "Rome Declaration on Nutrition" and the "Framework for Action". I am glad to see that our decisive financial contribution to the organisation of this event has borne fruit.

We need however to make sure that commitments taken today are implemented tomorrow.

The chance to eradicate undernutrition within a generation is in our hands. Let's grasp this historic opportunity!

Thank you.

(731 words)