

Republic of the Philippines

***Second International Conference on Nutrition  
Philippine Statement***

The delegation of the Government of the Philippines, headed by the National Nutrition Council of the Department of Health, would like to thank the FAO/ WHO for once again renewing the interest and focus on nutrition, building on the developments and experiences gained for more than two decades of nutrition action since the First International Conference on Nutrition. We likewise affirm our commitment to work with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Health Organization, UNICEF, other UN agencies and the international community in addressing today's major nutrition challenges since continued investment in nutrition is for the benefit of all.

The Philippines, like most of the low- and middle-income countries, is now experiencing the double burden of malnutrition aside from existing problems on maternal and child mortality and non-communicable diseases. The Philippines, like the rest of the international community recognizes the debilitating effects of both under- and overnutrition to individuals, communities, and nations not only in the immediate present but also in the far-reaching future. We likewise acknowledge that undernutrition and overnutrition are interrelated problems and that addressing undernutrition in the younger years will help prevent overnutrition and associated non-communicable diseases in adulthood.

The Philippines, an archipelagic state, is among the countries vulnerable to the effects of disasters and climate change. It has been one year since we felt the ravages of Super typhoon Haiyan, and we are continuing efforts to rehabilitate and build back better communities.

We are thankful for the support of the international community in this regard as the Philippines strengthens its engagement of international and national stakeholders on disaster risk reduction and mitigation initiatives.

The health and nutrition of those affected by disasters remain as a key goal of the Philippine Government. Those affected by disasters are among the vulnerable groups to which we pay particular attention – alongside other groups such as women, infants and young children and migrants.

We thereby express our commitment to consider the recommendations in the ICN2 Framework for Action and discover that fine mix that will address the unique situation of

the Philippines in terms of our nutritional problems within our socio-economic-political context.

The priorities that we would like to focus on are nutrition interventions addressing the first 1000 days of life such as, strengthening infant and young child feeding practices, scaling up actions to address micronutrient deficiencies as well as acute malnutrition, advancing efforts in nutrition in emergencies, developing nutrition-sensitive interventions among sectors of the government particularly in agriculture and social protection, and under the regime of decentralization, mobilizing local government units in including nutrition among their priorities. These principles are particularly relevant to the Philippines, given our stagnating prevalence of malnutrition among infants and young children, as well as pregnant and lactating women.

In 2008, we began the path of scaling up nutrition action and decided to already focus on the 0-24 month-old age group as a strategy not only to address undernutrition but more so to prevent the condition. And for the past 6-7 years, we have tried to saturate the Philippines with frontline workers who are capable of providing excellent support to mothers and families as they try to adopt optimum infant and young child feeding practices. We have learned many lessons, foremost of which are on the importance of also attending to the nutritional needs of pregnant and lactating women, and supporting and mentoring these frontline workers and adjustments that we see happening in the next years would be along these lines.

We also learned that exclusive breastfeeding and complementary feeding with continued breastfeeding are synergistic to each other, and to obtain the greatest benefits for child growth and development, both practices should be optimum. And here we find the challenge especially in complementary feeding. And we thus invite other countries in developing and testing more effective interventions to ensure that complementary feeding with continued breastfeeding happens at the right time and uses the right mix of foods for optimal infant and young child nutrition.

In this regard, we recognize that nutrition-sensitive policies and programs in agriculture, labor and employment, and social protection are necessary complements to ensure the family's physical and economic access to food in general and complementary food in particular. We concur that family farmers and small holders should be supported by integrated and multisectoral public policies that raise their productive capacity and incomes and strengthen their resilience.

Agriculture plays a critical role in ensuring food security and that one key solution to our nutritional problem is producing the amount and quality of food required by our people. Thus, incorporation of nutrition objectives into the design of food security policies, plans and programs is imperative.

Thus, Identifying and pursuing these policies and programs side by side with the traditional nutrition interventions that we know of will be a major focus of action in the

next two years. An example of a related effort is linking supplementary feeding using local food resource with local farmers as a strategy for income generation. Many other models can be developed and we are more than willing not only to share our experiences but also learn from and adapt models developed by other countries.

In this twin approach of nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions, we will continue to uphold the importance of gender-sensitive policies, programs and projects and culture-sensitive approaches especially in communities of indigenous peoples and in geographically isolated disadvantaged areas (GIDAs). We will continue to tap both the traditional mass media and the evolving social media in mobilizing key action ranging from nutrition-oriented food choices based on the country's food-based nutritional guidelines to nutrition-friendly decisions related to policies and programs. We will work with the private sector, exploring win-win arrangements for partnerships that will uphold good nutrition, promote, protect and support breastfeeding and children from harmful marketing practices.

And we will ensure that all initiatives will include the consciousness of preparedness, response and rehabilitation in emergency situations.

As a member-country of the SUN Movement, we will pursue all these interventions following the SUN principles of engagement of being rights-based, transparency, inclusiveness, mutual accountability, openness in communication, and conflict resolution. We will also organize and work with various networks, including the network of non-government organizations, academic institutions, UN agencies, development partners, donors, and the business community with social responsibility and enhance our systems to monitor and document progress in terms of process as well as nutritional outcomes.

As the global community adopts the sustainable goals for 2025, the Philippines expresses its solidarity with the rest of the world in embarking on the next leg of our journey to find sustainable solutions to malnutrition, mindful of the threats but more so of the growing opportunities presented by the integration of nations and groups of nations as in the ASEAN integration.

In closing, the Philippines recognizes the expertise and guidance the Framework for Action provides. We will continue to contribute further in achieving global nutrition-related goals by 2025.

We will uphold our responsibilities and work with our international partners to improve the nutritional status of Filipinos.

Finally, you can continue to count on the Philippines to do its part in living up to the 2014 Rome Declaration on Nutrition.

Thank you and good day.