

Press Release

**Tackling the root causes of malnutrition,
the needed step to secure the right to adequate food for all**

Geneva, 24 September 2014 - Member States gathered in Geneva on 22 and 23 September for an Open-Ended Working Group organised by WHO and FAO with the aim of finding an agreement on the Political Declaration for the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), which will be held in Rome from 19 to 21 November. The ICN2 seeks to propose an updated policy framework to address today's major food and nutrition challenges, to promote policy coherence and identify priorities to strengthen international cooperation in this area.

After months of advocacy efforts by public interest civil society organisations (CSOs) gathered in a coalition of 150 members for a more participatory and democratic UN process leading up to ICN2, a first formal opportunity for effective participation in the process was granted by the joint initiative of WHO and FAO. Mixed delegations from around 75 Member States negotiated the official conference outcome documents through interaction with a range of external constituencies, including public interest civil society.

During the two day meeting, public interest civil society organizations urged Member States to take a strong leadership role in finding a way forward to tackle the root causes of the multiple burden of malnutrition, namely the tragedy of over 800 million people estimated to be chronically undernourished, 2 billion people suffering from the consequences of micronutrient deficiencies, and the rapidly growing global epidemic of overweight and obesity, especially in developing countries, with the projection of over 2 billion adults affected by 2015.

CSOs, in their three interventions, raised a number of key issues outlined in their [Consensus Statement](#) to the Open-Ended Working Group. Firstly, **they stressed the need to be recognised as a group in their own right, distinct from the private sector**, the interests of which tend to be oriented towards reinforcing market values within the food and nutrition domain and maximising profits.

CSOs repeatedly highlighted **the need for a human-rights approach to food and nutrition** which guarantees the rights of populations and communities most affected by the different forms of malnutrition to be at the core of policymaking related to the implementation of the outcomes of the ICN2, in compliance with internationally agreed human rights obligations. Governments' policy space must be safeguarded in all phases and at all levels, CSOs highlighted, against potential conflicts of interests introduced by powerful economic actors, particularly transnational corporations.

In this regard, the coalition of civil society and social movements expressed **serious concerns at the statement made by the EU representative during the negotiation, advocating for the removal of any mention to the impact of trade on nutrition from the ICN2 Political Declaration draft**. The global trading system and WTO rules have devastated local and national sovereignty to protect and advance self-determined capacity to meet and maximize nutritional needs in local and regional food systems and economies.

“ICN2 is uniquely placed to send a powerful message to other intergovernmental fora whose policies have significant implications on food and nutrition strategies – both within and outside of the UN system” declared the CSO coalition.

Civil society organizations and social movements believe that Member States have a great responsibility for ensuring an ambitious outcome to this international conference. Indeed, the magnitude of the multiple burden of malnutrition hitting the world today demands it.

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