

Thank you Chair, Honourable Ministers, Regional Director and esteemed delegates. My name is Jo Jewell and I am here today representing World Cancer Research Fund International and six other organisations concerned with nutrition and non-communicable diseases: the European Heart Network, the European Consumer Organisation (BEUC), the European Public Health Alliance, the International Association for the Study of Obesity, the International Diabetes Federation-Europe and the NCD Alliance. We are grateful for the opportunity to contribute the following short statement to this meeting of European Ministers.

Statement to the WHO European Ministerial Conference on Nutrition and Non-Communicable Diseases

We would first like to commend the leadership of Member States and the WHO European Region for this initiative. This meeting is a key opportunity for governments to commit to scale up the regional response to non-communicable diseases through policy and action on unhealthy diet and nutrition.

In recent months, there has been significant progress in defining the global architecture for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, including targets and key policy commitments for unhealthy diet and obesity. In this context, we encourage Ministers to build on this platform by agreeing a regional roadmap for food and nutrition beyond 2013.

Today we call on Member States and WHO to consider three key recommendations from civil society:

One: Ensure a healthier media environment for our children

As a priority, Member States should commit to fully implement the WHO Set of Recommendations on the Marketing of Foods and Non-Alcoholic Beverages to Children in order to protect children from the harmful and misleading effects of food and beverage marketing in all its forms. The evidence on the impact of children's exposure to such marketing is extensive. We also have good emerging evidence on the effectiveness of different approaches to reducing children's overall exposure to marketing.

Two: Create a healthy food environment in schools

School settings should promote healthy lifestyles and the creation and maintenance of healthy preferences. Achieving a healthy start – where no child is left behind – is one of the most important ways to equip our populations with the tools and habits to maintain a healthy weight throughout life. We call on governments to establish standards for the foods provided in schools and other formal educational settings, including restrictions on the provision of foods high in fats, salt and sugar that do not promote health. Other effective measures include the provision of fresh fruit and vegetables and the inclusion of food preparation and nutrition skills on school curricula.

Three: Improve the quality of the food supply

Healthy diets and nutrition should be key objectives for the functioning of the food supply chain, as the availability, affordability and acceptability of different foods are critical factors in determining people's diets. We urge Ministers to introduce measures that encourage and incentivise the agricultural sector, including primary producers, as well as food processors, manufacturers and retailers, to produce, distribute and sell a healthier food supply that is accessible to all sectors of society. This will require multi-sectoral action all along the food supply chain, and may include the use of targeted economic tools.

Governments are now in a position to identify the policies most likely to be effective in their national contexts, and to monitor and evaluate their implementation. We note the significant expansion in the available evidence to inform this process and encourage you to learn from it as you move forward.

We would like to convey to you as Ministers that civil society organisations concerned with non-communicable diseases and nutrition are ready to support governments in this endeavour.

Within the European Region, non-communicable diseases are the leading cause of death and disability, and are a driving force behind significant health inequities. Unhealthy diet, overweight and obesity, alongside physical inactivity, are leading modifiable risk factors – policies to address them will make a significant contribution to tackling the disease burden associated with non-communicable diseases. We urge Ministers here today to adopt the Vienna Declaration.

Please be assured of the overwhelming support from civil society organisations for your efforts.

Thank you.