

The global voice for consumers La voix des consommateurs à travers le monde La voz global
para la defensa de los consumidores



Head Office

24 Highbury Crescent
London N5 1RX, UK
Tel: +44 (0)20 7226 6663
Fax: +44 (0)20 7354 0607
e-mail: consint@consint.org
www.consumersinternational.org

Thank you, Mr. Chairman

Agenda Item: 11.17 Global Strategy on diet, physical activity and health

Chairperson, honourable delegates,

We appreciate the opportunity to speak on this important issue on behalf of Consumers International, the global federation of consumer organisations worldwide.

Consumers International believes that the WHO Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health is an important tool which should assist governments to take action and to create policies within their own national framework to alleviate the problems of chronic NCDs.

In 2005 CI conducted a pilot survey on the implementation of the global strategy. The pilot study draws its conclusions from the responses of 40 governments around the world. We found that the national progress towards implementing the strategy has been varied. Only 15% of the governments surveyed already had a timetable for achieving the goals of the strategy. Only 24% said that they had national dietary and physical activity guidelines. Moreover, fewer than 20% of the respondents felt that they were receiving enough support in the form of information or technical training on the implementation of the strategy. This would indicate that the principle of WHO providing support on request of the Governments is not fully utilised even though all requests for assistance have been met.

Based on our findings the main recommendations include:

If governments are to implement the strategy effectively they need to create national measures to regulate marketing practices, and ensure transparent food labelling and responsible food production.

Work on an international code for the marketing of foods and beverages for children should be initiated.

Increased resources and investment is urgently needed – both for WHO to be able to provide further assistance as well as for further engagement of civil society organisations in the implementation of the strategy.

They should consult with further with consumer organisations and other public interest organisations and take the initiative to organise national and intra-regional roundtables to develop strategies and methods for effective and efficient implementation of the Global Strategy.

The 59th World Health Assembly offers a unique chance for governments to support WHO work on an international code, which would restrict the marketing of unhealthy foods to children as it did 25 years ago when adopting the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes. While such work progresses there are still steps to be taken immediately: As an example the US Centre for Disease Control and Prevention identified 1) decreased "television viewing" and 2) "promotion of" breastfeeding ' as the only two potential, cost-effective interventions that can be put in place immediately to deal with the childhood obesity epidemic.

Along with the issue of obesity, under-nutrition is still rampant in least developed and developing countries due to lack of access to nutritious food with essential vitamins and minerals. The UN Standing Committee on Nutrition in its 2006 position statement declared that *"These issues are still perceived to be separate. In reality both are often rooted in poverty and co-exist in communities, and even the same households, in most countries."*

We urge member governments and WHO to take the opportunity at WHA 2006 to take decisions to improve the health of billions of consumers by taking practical, concrete steps to implement the WHO Global strategy. Especially we would like to see WHO providing increased technical support to developing countries and supporting work on an international code on marketing of food and drinks to children.

Thank you