

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



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Thank you, Mr. Chairman

Agenda Item: 4.5: prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases: implementation of the global strategy

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 implementation of the global strategy for prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases, with its related resolutions, is an important effort through which governments can take action and create policies and programmes to alleviate the problems of chronic NCDs. These problems cannot be underestimated. Even in Europe, when expressed in disability-adjusted life years, NCDs represent 77% of the burden.

Ci is in particular interested in implementation of the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. Already 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.

Based on our findings the following recommendations were put forward:

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.

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.

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.

WHO should initiate work on an international code for the marketing of foods and beverages for children.

As much as CI believes in a dialogue with the private sector, past experience shows that this approach does not foster progress proportionate to the meeting the NCD challenge, and instead often creates complex situations of conflicts of interest. This Executive Board offers a unique chance for governments to request WHO to work on an international code, which would restrict the marketing of unhealthy foods to children, just as it did 26 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. Yet none of these two interventions are even mentioned in the Report by the Secretariat or in the proposed resolution and nor is there any notion of prevention and management of conflicts of interests.

We urge the Executive Board to take the opportunity and forward to the 60th WHA a resolution, which is concrete, guiding governments in their efforts to implement the Global Strategy on Diet. We would also like to see WHO providing increased technical support to developing countries and working on an international code on marketing of food and drinks to children.

Thank you