

UNSCN Submission to High Level Political Forum

1. An assessment of the situation regarding the principle of “ensuring that no one is left behind” at the global level: The United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition

Despite the progress in reducing hunger and undernutrition under the Millennium Development Goals, this progress was uneven across regions and populations groups. In addition the world faces a growing problem of obesity and related non-communicable diseases. There is a huge unfinished agenda that still leaves millions of people behind. The **UN Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016-2025)**, proclaimed on 1st April 2016, provides an unprecedented window of opportunity in the fight to overcome malnutrition in all its forms. The Decade is a commitment of Member States to undertake 10 years of sustained action and coherent implementation of policies and programmes, guided by the ICN2 Rome Declaration and the recommendations of the Framework for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Ending malnutrition in all its forms will be a major driver for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) which extend to all nations¹.

Improvements in human nutrition represent both a maker and a marker of sustainable development² Manifestations of malnutrition derive not just from a lack of sufficient, adequate and safe food, but from a host of interacting processes linking health (SDG3), care, education (SDG4), sanitation and hygiene (SDG6), access to resources, women’s empowerment (SDG5) and more. Good nutritional status leads to higher individual earnings and mental acuity, which in turn support macroeconomic and societal growth. Malnutrition in all its forms impairs individual productivity which acts as a drag on national growth (SDG1). In this sense, malnutrition will represent a pernicious, often invisible, impediment to the successful achievement of SDG targets³

The scope and nature of the nutrition challenges and problems are now better understood and documented; they are indeed global, extending to all countries, covering all forms of malnutrition – under-nutrition, overweight/obesity and micro-nutrient malnutrition – often simultaneously in the same country, the same household and even the same person⁴. It is estimated that 1 out of 3 people worldwide suffer from one or multiple forms of malnutrition.⁵

2. The identification of gaps, areas requiring urgent attention, risks and challenges

National governments have a prime responsibility in realising the Right to food for their citizens. UN agencies have responsibility to support governments to reach the global nutrition targets. With the Agenda 2030 and the Decade of Action on Nutrition there is now an even stronger collective responsibility of the UN system to engage, to act and to implement But this is not enough. The nutrition challenge requires inter-sectoral approaches involving all actors. The Decade invites governments and other stakeholders, including international and regional organisations, civil society,

¹ UNSCN, Nutrition and the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals

² Global Nutrition Report 2014

³ Ibid 1

⁴ GNR 2015.

⁵ Ibid 3

the private sector and academia, to actively support the implementation of the Decade. The UN system can and should indeed provide unified support to further advocacy for nutrition, help develop and implement robust country nutrition strategies, broker agreements and convene stakeholders, develop guidelines and analytical/monitoring tools, strengthen information systems, and leverage financial and technical assistance. The UNSCN has formulated four strategic objectives for the period 2016-2020, of which two directly contribute to close the gaps mentioned above: **Maximize UN policy coherence and advocacy on nutrition** and **Support consistent and accountable delivery by the UN system**. The UN system also has responsibility to reach out to existing platforms and strategic partners to ensure that lessons and experiences of these other actors, such as the Scaling up Nutrition Movement (SUN), are captured in global learning and exchange of information, while providing guidance to their nutrition programming to ensure alignment with globally and inter-governmentally agreed nutrition targets and goals.

3. Valuable lessons learned on ensuring that no one is left behind:

The UNSCN is a dedicated platform for open, substantive and constructive dialogue amongst UN agencies on their respective strategies and efforts related to nutrition, as well as for the formulation of aligned and joint global approaches, positions and actions to address the complex and many facets of the evolving nutrition challenges. The committee builds on the mandate and strength of its members and works according to a principle of subsidiarity to ensure maximum impact while avoiding duplication of efforts.⁶ UNSCN with its accountability to its UN member agencies as well as to member states through its ECOSOC mandate ensures the universal inclusiveness of its actions and outreach.

Elimination of all forms of malnutrition requires the revitalization of global partnerships (SDG17). There are valuable lessons to learn from the SUN movement that grew in just half a decade from an idea to a global network, involving 56 countries, hundreds of CSO's, private sectors actors, donors and UN agencies.

4. Emerging issues likely to affect the realization of this principle:

Malnutrition is closely linked to inequalities and the sustainability of food systems, and has complex political, economic, social and environmental factors. UNSCN third strategic objective is to **explore new and emerging nutrition-related issues**. It has identified critical emerging issues, including climate change, investment policies and trade, and proposes strategies to investigate them and address knowledge gaps, in collaboration with members including engaging with several platforms such as the Committee on World Food Security (CFS), as well as strategic research and knowledge institutes.⁷

5. Areas where political guidance by the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development is required:

One of the key messages of the State of Food Insecurity in the World 2014 is that “sustained political commitment at the highest level is a prerequisite for hunger eradication. It entails placing food security and nutrition at the top of the political agenda.”⁸

⁶ UNSCN Strategic Plan 2016-2020

⁷ Ibid 6

⁸ State of Food Insecurity in the World 2014 (FAO, IFAD, WFP)

UNSCN would welcome regular interactions with the HLPF, starting in 2016 about the implementation of the Decade of Action on Nutrition, its links with Agenda 2030 and the follow up of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2). During this and following sessions links should be made with the nutrition and SDG work streams of the CFS, an important intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder platform. These agenda items can be jointly organized by the UNSCN being one of the coordinating mechanisms of the Decade.

6. Policy recommendations on ways to accelerate progress for those at risk of being left behind:

Nutrition priorities should acknowledge rather than ignore complexities, it should therefore be highlighted in all the SDGs, ensuring nutrition sensitive development. Nutrition should be explicitly included in the country plans to address the SDGs allowing space for inclusion of relevant nutrition indicators. The revision of country UNDAFs would be an excellent opportunity for the UN system to support the country processes. Siloed interventions, one-nutrient-at a-time agendas and funding for individual projects in isolation of others can stifle progress. It is nutrition's complexity that underpins its multiple and multi-directional links with all of the SDGs. Clear, rather than over-simplified messaging on the critical links between nutrition and sustainable development is essential to priority setting and buy-in at all levels of government.

In the end, sustainable development will depend on it⁹.

Annex: UNSCN Strategic Plan 2016-2020

⁹ Ibid 1