

Dr Margaret Chan
Director-General
World Health Organization
Avenue Appia 20
1211 Geneva 27
Switzerland

February 5, 2013

Dear Director-General,

The growing international focus on nutrition in recent years has produced a number of strategies directed towards scaling up nutrition-specific interventions and expanding nutrition-sensitive policies and practices. This is avowed in such global initiatives as the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) movement, and the UN Renewed Efforts Against Child Hunger (REACH) initiative.

The WHO took a major step forward in the fight against malnutrition by endorsing the Comprehensive Implementation Plan on Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition at the World Health Assembly in May 2012. In addition, your presence at the high level meeting on Scaling Up Nutrition at the 67th United Nations General Assembly in September 2012 is a further significant demonstration of your support of and concern for the issue of malnutrition.

The International Conference on Nutrition + 21 (ICN+21) is a unique opportunity to engage and unite the international community for decades to come in a common fight against hunger and malnutrition. This high level conference will bring together food, agriculture, health, education, and other sectors to boost investment, provide guidance, build coherent policies and strategies in support of countries, and thus bolster global efforts to address malnutrition.

While we very much welcome the attention given to nutrition-sensitive topics (particularly agriculture and social protection) in the ICN+21 Concept Note, Strategic Framework for Action and suggested Framework for country papers, *we, the undersigned organisations would like to express our concern at the lack of attention given to assessing and exploring progress and barriers to the scaling-up of the nutrition-specific interventions, as defined by the 2008 Lancet undernutrition series and redefined in 2010 by the World Bank*. Indeed, the agenda and preparatory documents for the conference reveal a high prioritisation of food and agricultural issues. The guidelines for country nutrition papers include four topics that are largely oriented towards food and agriculture, while there is no

specific question concerning contributions from the health sector. Furthermore, the topics of the papers within the Call for experts clearly prioritize food and agricultural topics.

The 2012 World Health Assembly report was instrumental in affirming the role health systems must play in delivering these interventions. The difficulties in delivering these interventions at scale through health and community systems must be deeply evaluated and analysed, and the ICN+21 is an ideal opportunity to do this together with stakeholders from various sectors.

The objectives of the conference as outlined in the concept note clearly emphasise the importance of health. In fact, the specific outcome is to provide 'Member States and other stakeholder groups [...] with the necessary tools, guidelines and knowledge updates to develop national policies, programmes and plans in sectors including food and agriculture, trade, health and social welfare which will lead to equitable and measurable improvement of nutrition'.

We therefore believe that WHO, within the structure of this unique event, can assure the necessary leadership to position health sector issue within the ICN+21 agenda. We are committed to providing any support you might need to ensure health related nutrition challenges will be properly addressed in the conference.

We look forward to hearing from you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Signatories

