

Written statement by World Cancer Research Fund International to the 66th session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe (Copenhagen, 12-15th September 2016)

Agenda item 5c: Action plan for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases in the WHO European Region (2016-2025)

World Cancer Research Fund International welcomes the development of the new European NCD Action Plan, highlighting that 40% of cancers could be prevented through tackling major risk factors, including unhealthy diets and overweight & obesity.

Our analysis of worldwide research shows that being overweight or obese is linked to an increased risk of developing 11 cancers¹. With rates of overweight & obesity and nutrition-related NCDs rising at an alarming rate throughout the European region, governments have a fundamental role to play in developing and implementing policy interventions at a population and individual level to promote healthy diets.

Such policy interventions must be comprehensive across three key domains: food environment, food system and behavior change communication². We therefore welcome the Action Plan's multi-dimensional focus on fiscal interventions, restriction of food marketing to children, product reformulation & improvement, as well as promotion of health in specific settings.

In addition, we believe that a comprehensive approach to secure impactful policies which reduce overweight & obesity and tackle nutrition-related NCDs will be strengthened by the consideration of additional actions such as: public awareness campaigns to inform populations of food and nutrition; setting specific incentives and rules to create a local, healthy retail and food service environment, particularly in low-income neighbourhoods.

We urge WHO European Member States to:

- Endorse the WHO Regional Office for Europe's Action plan for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases (2016-2025);
- Set national NCD and nutrition targets and implement the proposed interventions in the Action Plan without delay;
- Prioritise mandatory interventions over voluntary initiatives;
- Implement a dedicated governance structure to ensure a multi-sectoral, whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach to promoting health.

For more further information contact: policy@wcrf.org.

¹ Stomach cardia, Kidney, Gallbladder, Liver, Advanced prostate cancer, Ovarian, Endometrial, Pancreatic, Colorectal, Postmenopausal breast cancer, Oesophageal (adenocarcinoma).

² Our NOURISHING framework highlights where governments need to take action to promote healthy diets and reduce overweight and obesity. The framework brings together ten policy areas across three domains: food environment, food system and behavior change communication. The framework is accompanied by a regularly updated database providing an extensive overview of implemented government policy actions from around the world: www.wcrf.org/NOURISHING.