

CSO FORUM DECLARATION TO ICN2

From November 16-18, we, social movements representing peasants, small-scale fishers and fishing communities, pastoralists, urban poor, consumers, women, youth, Indigenous Peoples and agricultural and food workers, came together with the representatives of public interest civil society organizations that have actively engaged in the preparatory process of the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), to share our values, and aspirations, to join forces in our common vision on how to eradicate malnutrition in all its forms, and to hold governments and intergovernmental organizations to account on their obligations and commitments.

It is unacceptable that in a world of plenty more than 800 million of our brothers and sisters go to bed hungry every night and over half a billion are obese. More than 150 million children suffer from stunting, over 50 million children are wasted, more than 40 million children are obese, and approximately 800,000 babies die every year because they are not optimally breastfed. The injustice of malnutrition has meant that several thousand of our children have died since this discussion started. These problems should have been tackled a long time ago.

22 years after ICN1, this conference is taking place without properly evaluating progress or failures and without significant participation of civil society, in particular those most affected by hunger and malnutrition in all its forms. We deplore that ICN1 has sunk without trace and we do not want this to happen for ICN2.

The conclusion of the ICN2 negotiations is a welcome step, in particular its focus on malnutrition in all its form. However, we consider it inadequate to confront the scale of the global malnutrition challenge.

We reaffirm that food is the expression of values, cultures, social relations and people's self-determination, and that the act of feeding oneself and others embodies our sovereignty, ownership and empowerment. When nourishing ourselves and eating with our family, friends, and community, we reaffirm our cultural identities, interdependence with nature, control of our life course and human dignity. Understanding the challenge of malnutrition in all its forms therefore requires a holistic and multidisciplinary analysis, one that combines the political and technical perspectives.

We recognize that the current hegemonic food system and agro-industrial production model are not only unable to respond to the existing malnutrition problems but have contributed to the creation of different forms of malnutrition and the decrease of the diversity and quality of our diets. Trade agreements, support of agribusiness models and promotion of monoculture and GMO, corporate grabbing of land, oceans, lakes, rivers and aquatic resources, and lack of investment in small-scale food production, have led to displacement and impoverishment of small-scale producers all over the world. The lack of respect to the mobility of many producers, their forced sedentarization, the lack of respect to communal tenure of their natural resources, and the privatization or destruction of governance structures, have all caused malnutrition and environmental damage with irreversible consequences on productive systems.

This has also led to profoundly negative environmental impacts such as soil erosion and contamination, ocean acidification, loss of fertility, reduction of biodiversity, and climate change. Marketing of ultra-processed products have contributed to the surge of obesity while unethical

practices by breast milk-substitute producers continue to undermine the life-saving practice of breastfeeding. The persistence of gender inequalities and the continued violations of women's rights are among the root causes of women and child malnutrition. No proper nourishment is possible if the hearts and minds of people are violated.

Taking this into account, we reaffirm that nutrition can only be addressed in the context of vibrant and flourishing local food systems that are deeply ecologically rooted, environmentally sound and culturally and socially appropriate. We are convinced that food sovereignty is a fundamental pre-condition to ensure food security and guarantee the human right to adequate food and nutrition. In this context, it is necessary to reaffirm the centrality of small-scale and family food producers as the key actors and drivers of local food systems and the main investors in agriculture. Their secure access to, and control over, resources such as land, water and aquatic resources, adequate mobility routes, local seeds, breeds and all other genetic resources, technical and financial resources, as well as social protection, particularly for women, are all essential factors to ensure diversified diets and adequate nutrition.

It therefore becomes imperative to tackle the political, social, cultural and economic determinants of malnutrition in all its forms, including undernourishment, stunting, wasting, micronutrient deficiencies, overweight and obesity, and diet-related non-communicable diseases. However, the framing of any policy, programme and action plan on food and nutrition should be the unambiguous understanding of the rights to adequate food and nutrition, health and safe water, as fundamental human rights, which identify people as rights-holders and states as duty-bearers with an obligation to respect, protect and fulfil these and other related rights.

Accountability and Follow-up

ICN2 is another step in addressing a long overdue problem. There is an urgent need to strengthen governmental commitment and raise the level of ambition. This must be achieved through an effective follow-up process, with the active participation of social movements and civil society organizations, with a clear timeline to reach the objectives as well as specific indicators and benchmarks for monitoring progress.

Strong accountability is imperative for ensuring that the commitments made at ICN2 truly contribute to ending malnutrition in all its forms. We appreciate the efforts by FAO and WHO to coordinate their work plans in the light of the ICN2 outcomes and welcome the UN General Assembly (UNGA) endorsement and oversight. However, we remain concerned that the governance and accountability mechanisms for the implementation of the ICN2 outcomes appear unclear, fragmented, disconnected and duplicative. In this context, we call upon Member States to commit to developing a coherent, accountable and participatory governance mechanism, safeguarded against undue corporate influence. Such mechanism should be based on principles of human rights, social justice, transparency, and democracy, and directly engage civil society, in particular the populations and communities which are most affected by different forms of malnutrition.

We recommend the following platforms as appropriate for follow-up:

Firstly, we recognize the UN Committee on World Food Security (CFS) - reaffirming its role as the foremost inclusive government-led global platform among all concerned actors - as the critical space where policy coherence for food security and nutrition needs to be established. In this context, it is important to build consistency between the ICN2 follow-up process and the CFS Global Strategic Framework. As the CFS, despite its mandate, has thus far primarily focused on food security, we urge CFS Member States to fully integrate nutrition in its workplan and ensure that the World Health Organization (WHO) is officially included in the Secretariat and Advisory Group.

Secondly, Member States should ensure that the post-2015 development framework is consistent with the imperatives of food and nutrition security and includes ambitious goals and targets, with robust indicators and accountability to those ends across all relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Thirdly, Member States must also establish nutrition targets and intermediate milestones, consistent with the timeframe for the implementation of the agreed six World Health Assembly (WHA) global nutrition targets (2025) and the relevant targets in the WHO Global Monitoring Framework for NCDs. As such, reporting and monitoring of progress towards these targets should take place in the context of the WHA along with reporting on nutrition policy commitments.

Lastly, Member States should request that the Human Rights Council ensure that the ICN2 follow-up and related policies are coherent with the respect, protection and fulfilment of the right to adequate food and nutrition and related rights.

Human Rights and rights-based approach to food and nutrition security

We call upon Member States to ensure that national and international public policies respect, protect and fulfil human rights obligations, and act in accordance with the realization of the right to adequate food and nutrition and related rights.

Women are the primary agents of change in combating malnutrition in all its forms. ICN2 has thus far failed to take this evidence into due account. The full realization of women's human rights is central to the pursuit of the right to adequate food and nutrition for all. As such, we call upon Member States to institute policies that empower women, including paid maternity leave, support for breastfeeding in the workplace, and universal social protection. We also call upon Member States to ensure the social recognition of unpaid work – through social and community support mechanisms – and to promote the gendered redistribution of household tasks. We further urge Member States to ensure that all forms of violence against women are eradicated.

Women's sexual and reproductive rights and health also have a direct impact on combatting malnutrition and must therefore be guaranteed, including committing to efforts to end child marriage and prevent unwanted adolescent pregnancies.

Breastfeeding is the first act of food sovereignty in all its dimensions. The support of breastfeeding and optimal young child feeding must be an integral part of health care systems and health policies, and free from commercial influence. We call upon Member States to ensure that the Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding guides policy and programme

action. We also call upon Member States to protect children from aggressive and inappropriate marketing of breast-milk substitutes by adopting the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and relevant WHO resolutions, and establishing effective monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. Micronutrient interventions and supplementation should not undermine breastfeeding and local bio-diverse culturally appropriate sustainable foods, and be in-line with government nutrition policies.

Small-scale farmers, pastoralists, small-scale fishers and fishing communities, agricultural and food workers, Indigenous Peoples, landless people, rural women and youth, are the main producers of food around the world and their contribution to guarantee healthy diets is essential. Nonetheless, they suffer daily violations of their human rights. For this reason, we urge Member States to respect peasants' rights and the environment where they live, and welcome and support the creation of an Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group at the UN Human Rights Council on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas.

Indigenous food systems sustain and nurture our cultures and traditional economies. However, systemic violations of Indigenous Peoples' rights to lands, territories, oceans, seas, inland waterways, lakes, and other resources, has disproportionate and negative impacts on livelihoods, including access to traditional foods. We emphasize the need for a human-rights based approach to nutrition and food as understood through the lens of existing human rights standards, including the 2007 United Nations Declaration on Indigenous People's Rights as a minimum standard.

We call upon Member States to cooperate in supporting productive systems in areas of marginal productivity, protecting resilience mechanisms such as seasonal mobility corridors, as well as communal and seasonally used lands, and withdrawing the barriers to mobility, thereby reducing the need of local communities for humanitarian assistance.

We also request that Member States pay special attention to agricultural and plantation workers. There are over 200 million hungry and malnourished workers without sufficient income to buy enough nutritious food for themselves and their families. The solution is not to provide food supplements: employers should be responsible for paying workers a living wage.

Sovereign local food and agricultural systems based on agroecological principles

Nutrition must be rooted in local food systems based on food sovereignty, small-scale food producers, agroecological principles, sustainable use of natural resources, local seeds and livestock breeds, traditional knowledge and practice, and local markets, guaranteeing sustainable and resilient biodiversity and diversity of diets.

We denounce the negative economic, social, environmental and cultural impacts caused by the global grabbing of land, oceans, lakes, rivers, and aquatic resources, and their grave impact on food sovereignty.

We call upon Member States to recognize that small-scale food producer-led sustainable, resilient local food systems can best respond to the threat of climate change, and commit to concerted actions that strengthens local food systems, including promoting local and regional markets and ensuring healthy ecosystems. This will most certainly drive significant

improvements in nutrition, and contribute significantly to the prevention of malnutrition of all its forms.

We also call on Member States to ensure that Regional Governments and Local Authorities establish appropriate and multi-actor local food policy governance bodies that include the consumers and small-scale local food producers. Furthermore, we call for reforms of current local food procurement practice for school canteens, homes for the elderly and hospitals, and other public institutions as well as social groceries to include clauses that privilege the provision of fresh local produce by small-scale local producers.

Coherent and coordinated management of nutrition throughout the lifecycle and at all levels

We support an integrated approach to malnutrition that builds community capacity, promotes optimal infant and young child feeding, especially breastfeeding, improves dietary intake for women and children during the first 1,000 days, and improves nutritious diets, along with supplementation as per the World Health Organization's recommendation in areas where micronutrient deficiencies are known to be a public health problem.

The policy and program commitments that must follow ICN2 should address the root causes of malnutrition in all its forms among all age groups, including infants, young children, adolescents, adults, the elderly, disabled, and marginalized, working poor and other vulnerable groups. This includes accelerated progress on all six of the WHA global nutrition targets--stunting, anaemia, low birth weight, overweight, exclusive breastfeeding and wasting--and Global WHO NCD targets.

In order to do this, we call upon Member States to recognize that the nutrition of young children, adolescent girls and women - particularly in the 1,000 day window between pregnancy and age two - is of paramount importance as it helps set the foundation of human development.

We call upon Member States to fully embrace the "*do no harm*" principle as the baseline of any policy, including agriculture, fisheries, forestry and food, and ensure that these policies *at a minimum* do not harm people's nutrition and rather aim at improving people's nutrition status. Furthermore, situations of crisis and protracted crises often produce international and regional aid programs that do not meet the real nutritional needs of affected communities and are carried out without consulting local communities.

The large majority of deaths in children under-five due to malnutrition do not happen in acute emergencies but in relatively stable countries. It is imperative that the ICN2 follow-up addresses the profound social, economic and political determinants of malnutrition, and in particular, the high levels of acute malnutrition. In this context, we urge governments to support appropriate treatment approaches, such as the Community Management of Acute Malnutrition (CMAM), and preventive measures that empower communities and strengthen health and food systems, as well as resilient livelihoods and production systems. We also call upon Member States to commit to integrate actions designed to improve nutrition across all sectors and programmes, including those focused on water and sanitation, education, women's empowerment, and agriculture. We also urge Member States to recognise, validate, respect and protect traditional knowledge that guarantees nutrition.

We further urge Member States to address the underlying causes of malnutrition at the community level related to food, care and health so that existing product-based approaches are limited to certain circumstances, including the treatment of acute malnutrition, and do not interfere with human rights- and food-based, local, bottom-up, capacity-building approaches for the prevention of all forms of malnutrition.

Consumers have a right to healthy, affordable, accessible and culturally adequate food options, and to be protected (particularly children) from aggressive marketing of unhealthy food and beverage that promote malnutrition, obesity and diet-related NCDs. We call upon Member States to develop and implement policies that encourage the consumption of naturally nutritious diets, promote physical activity in healthy environmental conditions, and discourage the over-consumption of salt, sugar and saturated fats. Ultra-processed food and beverage products, especially when they are affordably priced, need to be regulated through economic and legislative measures.

Consumers have the right to know, in easy to understand terms, the nutritional content of food and beverages as well as have full information on the presence of potentially harmful substances as well as ingredients from GMO crops at any level of the production chain.

Democratic governance of food and nutrition and global regulatory framework

We are deeply concerned that, under current trade and investment regimes (both bi- and multilateral), the governmental policy space for advancing public health, food and nutrition related measures is severely limited.

We therefore urge Member States to protect the public policy space for food, nutrition and health by ensuring that trade and investment agreements are compliant with existing international obligations in relation to the right to adequate food and nutrition, the right to health and other human rights. Furthermore, we call on Member States to guarantee effective public participation and ensure that the views of the most affected are taken into full consideration in relation to trade and investment negotiations.

The realization of the right to food and nutrition, and the right to health, are hampered by economic, social and political inequalities as well as by existing power imbalances. There is an urgent need to ensure proper regulation and accountability of powerful economic actors, such as transnational corporations. In this respect, we call upon Member States to regulate those practices and initiatives of the corporate sector, both intra and extraterritorial, that might negatively interfere with the enjoyment of the human right to adequate food and nutrition, women's rights and the right to health. Among others, these activities may include land and water grabbing; soil, food, water and human contamination with agrochemicals; the commodification of seeds and livestock breeds; the marketing of breast milk substitutes; and the production and marketing of ultra-processed and junk food in particular though not exclusively to children. We therefore welcome the establishment of an Open-Ended Intergovernmental Working Group on a legally binding instrument on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights and stand ready to support governments' action in this area.

The policy space of Governments must be protected, in all phases and at all levels, against conflicts of interest introduced by inappropriate relationships with powerful economic actors, including transnational corporations. In this respect, Member States and UN agencies are urged to design and implement effective rules and regulations on conflict of interest, and review and potentially terminate or re-design in conformity with these rules and regulations, all Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and multi-stakeholder arrangements.

Conclusion

22 years – an entire generation – have passed since the first ICN. It is unacceptable that millions of people continue suffer from and die of preventable causes of malnutrition in all its forms. This violence must stop immediately.

We call upon Member States to make clear and firm commitments at both national and international levels to ensure the full realization of the human right to adequate food and nutrition and related rights. We will not watch idly as another 22 years pass by.

We stand ready to play our part and take up our responsibilities. We demand that Member States and the UN system live up to their obligations.

We hereby declare a worldwide People's Decade of Action on Nutrition.

The time for action is now!