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REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EUROPE
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ЕВРОПЕЙСКОЕ РЕГИОНАЛЬНОЕ БЮРО

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Date: 13 October 2017

Dr Nino Berdzuli
Deputy Minister
Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs
144, Ak. Tsereteli Ave.
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Georgia

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Dear Dr Berdzuli,

**Symposium on Sustainable Food Systems for Healthy Diets
A joint meeting of the WHO and FAO Regional Offices for Europe
Budapest, Hungary, 4–5 December 2017**

I have the honour to inform you that the WHO Regional Office for Europe will collaborate with the FAO Regional Office for Europe in organizing the above-mentioned meeting in Budapest, Hungary on 4–5 December 2017.

The aim of the meeting is to examine the current status and assess progress in addressing all forms of malnutrition in the WHO European Region, notably with regard to efforts to promote healthy and sustainable diets and to prevent obesity and diet-related noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). Success stories and visionary scenarios will be presented and discussed, with speakers invited from Member States, academia and relevant international organizations.

The symposium will focus on the multiple challenges countries face in promoting healthy diets and will be structured around four thematic areas identified as relevant to achieving healthy, diversified and balanced diets:

- Nutrition-sensitive agriculture and food systems,
- Creating healthy food environments,
- Improving nutrition of vulnerable groups,
- Governance, leadership and accountability for nutrition

The meeting supports the continuing implementation of the WHO European Food and Nutrition Action Plan 2015-2020, and also aligns with the global commitments contained in the UN Sustainable Development Goals, the ICN2 Framework for Action and the UN Decade on Nutrition.

I am very pleased to invite you to nominate a participant from the nutrition/health sector. The FAO Regional Office for Europe will be inviting representatives from the relevant ministries with responsibility for food and agriculture.

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The working languages of the meeting will be English and Russian and simultaneous translation will be provided.

The travel of participants will be arranged for and funded by the Regional Office for Europe. Participants will also receive a daily subsistence allowance for the duration of the meeting, in accordance with WHO travel rules and regulations.

I look forward to receiving your country's nomination with the name, functional title and email address of the proposed participant, at your earliest convenience. The Secretariat will then communicate directly with the nominee; providing the necessary documentation and administrative information in good time.

I would be grateful if your response could be addressed to Dr João Breda, Head, WHO European Office for Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases & a.i. Programme Manager Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity by email (rodriguezdasilvabred@who.int) with copy to Ms Liza Villas (lvillas@who.int), as soon as possible, but not later than 6 November 2017.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Gaudez/Galea
Director
Division of Noncommunicable Diseases and Promoting Health through the Life-course

Enclosure:
Scope and purpose

Copy for information to:

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Symposium on Sustainable Food Systems for Healthy Diets
A joint meeting of the WHO and FAO Regional Offices for Europe
Budapest, Hungary
4–5 December 2017

Original: English

Scope and purpose

Two thirds of premature deaths in the Region are caused by four major NCDs (cardiovascular disease (CVD), diabetes, cancers and chronic respiratory disease). By tackling major risk factors at least 80% of all heart disease, stroke and diabetes and 40% of cancer could be prevented. Analysis of the Global Burden of Disease Study shows that dietary factors are the most important factors that undermine health and well-being in every Member State in the WHO European Region. As such, efforts to improve the nutritional quality of diets are essential to improve health and well-being among the European population.

The challenge is significant with high social and economic costs for individuals, families, communities and governments. More than 55 percent of adults in the European region are overweight or obese, and diets are far removed from national guidelines, with too much energy, saturated fat, *trans*-fat, sugar and salt and inadequate amounts of whole grains, fruits and vegetables. At the same time, the challenge of micronutrient deficiencies persists among specific at-risk groups and in some countries, noticeably in the form of anemia and/or iodine and zinc deficiencies. Research also indicates that some population groups in the Region may be lacking other micronutrients, notably vitamin A and D. The prevalence of stunting in children under age of five years is generally low in the region but with wide variability between countries, and ranges from 1.1 to 26.7%; the prevalence of wasting ranges from 0.2 to 10.0%. There is thus much scope in Europe to improve nutrition, and for some countries double-duty action to address all forms of malnutrition would be beneficial.

The WHO European Food and Nutrition Action Plan 2015-2020 is the overarching policy framework for the Regional Office for Europe's work in this area. This has since been reinforced by the international commitments contained in the UN Sustainable Development Goals (notably goals 2 and 3), the ICN2 Framework for Action and the UN Decade on Nutrition. These frameworks outline policies with high potential to address all types of malnutrition, notably through:

- Raising the nutrition sensitivity of food systems to ensure adequate food supply for healthy dietary intake;
- Creating healthy food environments to ensure availability, affordability and acceptability of healthy food options, while limiting the promotion of foods high in fats, sugar and/or salt;

- Addressing the specific needs of vulnerable groups, including low-socioeconomic groups, women of reproductive age, infants and young children;
- Improving policy coherence across relevant sectors through improved governance and accountability for nutrition
- Reinforcing health systems to promote healthier diets
- Enhancing monitoring and surveillance initiatives to track relevant changes over time

The symposium will provide a forum to showcase action by Member States in each of these policy areas that contribute to achieving healthy, diversified and balanced diets. Notably, the symposium will:

1. Illustrate good practices of policy implementation
2. Highlight innovative approaches to policy coherence, coordination and collaboration

Innovative case studies, success stories, and visionary prospects will be presented to inspire Member States. The studies will showcase opportunities to be more strategic, more innovative, and more effective. In so doing, the symposium will support countries to operationalise and implement their commitments to nutrition, increase joined-up thinking around food and nutrition, and most importantly encourage countries to use the potential of food systems for healthy diets.

Expected outcomes of the meeting are as follows:

- Increased awareness of international processes relevant for achieving high quality diets and improved nutrition
- Increased understanding of the importance of food systems for healthy diets and improved nutrition
- Enhanced knowledge of approaches to improving policy coherence and collaboration between relevant sectors (agriculture, health, education, social protection, finance)
- Guidance to WHO and FAO on future approaches to working with Member States on sustainable food systems for healthy diets

At this meeting, a status report on European food and nutrition policies will also be presented, informed by the results of the WHO Global Nutrition Policy Survey 2017 and other data sources.

For this meeting, national nutrition or obesity leads are invited as the main audience. Valued experts in the area of food and nutrition policy worldwide are also invited to support the meeting, as well as partners from relevant UN Agencies and selected NGOs.