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**NMH HPM**

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स्वास्थ्य एवं परिवार कल्याण मंत्रालय  
निर्माण भवन, नई दिल्ली - 110011  
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA  
MINISTRY OF HEALTH & FAMILY WELFARE  
NIRMAN BHAWAN, NEW DELHI - 110011

D.O. No.M.11019/2/2004-IH

Date: 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2004

Dear *Shri Pun*

We have received "Draft Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health" which was presented in the 113<sup>th</sup> Session of Executive Board of WHO in January, 2004 and have got it examined in detail by various stake holders.

We welcome the initiative of WHO for the containment of Non – communicable diseases. However, it needs to be understood that the requirements of developed countries and countries like India cannot be the same. The draft policy perhaps need to focus more on incidence of diseases stemming from malnutrition and problems of poverty and hunger which is a major problem in developing countries. The draft policy it appears focuses dis – proportionately on energy rich diets and their impact on obesity leading to non – communicable diseases which a narrower issue more relevant to developed countries. Developing countries with a large population engaged in physical labour need energy rich diets like fats & sugar. Hence the focus of the global strategy on Diet should be on healthy diets as a solution to both malnutrition and obesity rather than on consuming less or more of certain specific food items.

We find it difficult to support the recommendations regarding new taxes, price controls and subsidies on certain foods to encourage availability of and access to these specific kinds of foods. Levy of such taxes may lead to increase in the food price and would dis – proportionately impact the lower income population. Therefore, we believe that the best way to propagate healthy foods is by extension and having effective food laws. Giving tax incentive to so called "healthy foods" and taxing the so called "unhealthy" ones may turn out to be controversial. It may also have implications for WTO Commitments of various countries.

Food cannot be treated on same footing as tobacco. The decision to eat or not to eat a food rests with an individual. The national / state government can only be responsible for imparting correct information to the population.

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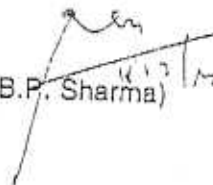
ADG / NMH

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The views of this Ministry may kindly be communicated to WHO Head Quarters under intimation to this Ministry.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

  
(B.P. Sharma)

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