

Meeting  
with  
UNITED NATIONS AND OTHER AGENCIES  
Geneva, 4 June 2003

---



**Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health**  
**World Health Organization**  
**Geneva 2003**

© World Health Organization 2003

All rights reserved. Publications of the World Health Organization can be obtained from Marketing and Dissemination, World Health Organization, 20 Avenue Appia, 1211 Geneva 27, Switzerland (tel: +41 22 791 2476; fax: +41 22 791 4857; email: [bookorders@who.int](mailto:bookorders@who.int)).

The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this publication do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the World Health Organization concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or of its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries. Dotted lines on maps represent approximate border lines for which there may not yet be full agreement.

**The mention of specific companies or of certain manufacturers' products does not imply that they are endorsed or recommended by the World Health Organization in preference to others of a similar nature that are not mentioned. Errors and omissions excepted, the names of proprietary products are distinguished by initial capital letters.**

The World Health Organization does not warrant that the information contained in this publication is complete and correct and shall not be liable for any damages incurred as a result of its use.

The views expressed in this publication are those of the participants in WHO consultations and do not necessarily represent the stated views or policies of the World Health Organization.

**Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health**  
**World Health Organization Meeting with United Nations and other Agencies**  
**Geneva, 4 June 2003**

**Meeting Note**

On 4 June 2003, WHO hosted the first consultation with United Nations and other agencies regarding the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health. Dr Derek Yach, Executive Director, Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health, chaired the meeting that was composed of representatives from: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN), World Bank (WB), and World Food Programme (WFP).

Meeting objective

The objective of the meeting was to allow WHO to raise critical issues related to diet, physical activity and health, and to hear from participants about their Organization's views on these issues, and areas where UN and other agencies can complement each other's work related to the Global Strategy.

Introduction

Dr Pekka Puska reviewed the present state of world health. The current epidemiological transition, in which noncommunicable disease rates are overriding communicable disease rates, is seen even in developing countries which are hard hit by the double burden of disease. Globalization and development in developing countries often lead to reduced levels of physical activity and a transition to diets consisting of ever-increasing amounts of foods that are high in sugar, saturated fat, and salt, and low in fruits and vegetables. These and other diet-related risk factors are concentrated more and more in the lower socio-economic sectors of populations, and will lead to chronic diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancers, and obesity.

Low-cost prevention programmes can work quickly to reduce risk factors and improve the health of populations when there is broad-based political and societal support for such actions. At the behest of Member States, WHO is developing the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health to address the increasing incidence and prevalence of chronic diseases and their risk factors.

Dr Ricardo Uauy presented the newly published WHO/FAO Report: "*Diet, Nutrition and the Prevention of Chronic Diseases*", (TRS916). This report makes dietary recommendations for populations and serves as the key science base of the Global Strategy. Dr Uauy, Chair of the Expert Consultation that produced the report, reviewed the process of creating the report, the recommendations, and the weight of

evidence behind the recommendations. He emphasized that a life-course perspective is vital in the effort to improve the health of populations.

## Discussion

Meeting participants offered short remarks about their priorities and what their agencies could offer in a co-ordinated effort to improve diets, physical activity levels and health globally.

### **FAO:**

- Collaboration with WHO has become an important part of FAO's work.
- The Joint WHO/FAO Expert Report is an outstanding example of the work the two agencies can do together.
- FAO will be compiling a list of the questions they received in response to the Expert Report and will pursue appropriate replies.
- FAO is enthusiastic about working with WHO on the Global Strategy, and plans to develop the FAO strategy in such a way that that both strategies are complementary and supportive of one another.
- Although FAO's work has traditionally focused more on food safety than on nutrition and health, which has normally been within the purview of WHO, the upcoming FAO strategy, to be ready in 2004, will address: diets and consumer behaviour; consumer education and communication; technological changes in production and processing and improvement of product quality; trade and economic implications; movement and diversification in commodities; and what impact the Expert Report recommendations will have on supply of, and demand for, foods.
- FAO is committed to work on the prevention of chronic diseases and their risk factors in developed and developing nations.
- FAO is committed to addressing the simultaneous occurrence of undernourishment and overnourishment, and the double burden of disease often seen in developing nations.
- In strategy development and implementation, it is important to have more input from developing countries and representatives of populations who suffer from hunger and the double burden of disease.
- Research priorities should include a review of current dietary guidelines in countries, to see if they are consistent with the Expert Report, and if they are being implemented successfully.

### **World Bank:**

- The consultation held by World Bank and WHO in November 2002 addressed issues central to the Global Strategy. The topics of that consultation included: the nutrition transition in developing countries, the impact of policy on the nutrition transition, dynamic shifts in food processing, marketing and distribution in developing countries, and the research and policy options for the future. World Bank has produced an HNP Discussion Paper report of this consultation: "*Food Policy Options, Preventing and Controlling Nutrition Related Noncommunicable*

*Diseases*,” which is also available on their website (<http://www.worldbank.org/nutrition>).

- In agriculture policy, shifting the focus from economics to nutrition will be difficult. Subsidies are currently considered for their economic impact as opposed to their nutrition or health impact. Furthermore, the economic instrument of taxation of certain foods for health considerations may not be sufficiently viable to tackle the problems of diet and nutrition.
- Even in ministries of health, nutrition is not always high on the agenda so it will be necessary to shift some attention from treatment to prevention.
- High priority should be given to research on the education and physical education of school children, and to the question: “Will people pay more for healthy food?”

#### **IAEA :**

- IAEA has an extensive research agenda in the area of nutrition and sustainability.
- IAEA has technical expertise using isotopes which will allow them to measure energy metabolism, body composition, and micronutrient intake.
- IAEA is ready to work with WHO to measure the effectiveness of nutrition interventions and programmes, and to help to set standards.

#### **UNESCO:**

- Physical activity and sport are of great importance and should be a priority as there is a correlation between the increase in noncommunicable diseases and policies on physical education in schools, communities, and societies.
- UNESCO would like to mobilize a wide coalition to promote and support physical activity in conjunction with the Global Strategy.

#### **UNSCN:**

- UNSCN Working Groups could be used as a testing ground for new ideas and proposals for implementation of the Global Strategy.
- Research priorities should include the double burden of disease, and successful advocacy and communications.

#### **UNECE:**

- The Global Strategy should promote availability and consumption of high-quality fruits and vegetables.
- UNECE and WHO should coordinate efforts to advocate for health claims for fruits and vegetables. Coordination is a necessity, and should include governments and industry, as the current regulations in Europe do not allow for health claims on fruits and vegetables, although health claims are allowed for highly processed foods.
- Research should explore the issues of aggressive marketing of processed foods, how the lessons learned could be applied to promotion of fruits and vegetables, and what is the availability and quality of fruits and vegetables in different sectors of society.

- UNECE will be hosting a meeting in late June 2003 which will cover issues of fruit and vegetable production, marketing, and consumption. UNECE would like a representative from WHO to attend the meeting.

#### **UNDP:**

- Nutrition and physical activity are important development issues and these priorities should be integrated with the Millennium Development Goals which are central to UNDP's work.
- UNDP is developing the work on Sport and Development, and sees the potential for meaningful interaction between the Global Strategy and Sport and Development.

#### **IFPRI:**

- IFPRI has been increasing its work on diet and physical activity for the last two years and have research programmes that address some of the issues of the Global Strategy, as well as some programmes that could be adapted to address current gaps in knowledge.
- In developing and implementing the Global Strategy, it is important to explore the pertinent policies in different countries, and to understand their rapidly changing trends in consumer behaviour, the rates, patterns, and the drivers of those trends.
- WHO and the meeting participants should set priorities for the research agenda in the area of diet and physical activity. Some possibilities: co-existence of under- and over-nutrition in the same household or community; looking at food policy, legislation and regulation with a nutrition perspective as well as an economics perspective; institutional constraints; gender issues; rates, patterns, and drivers of consumer behaviour; availability of food for a healthy diet; prices and incentives for a healthy diet (for consumers and for producers); truth in advocacy, marketing and labelling; public and corporate governance; successful behaviour change.
- IFPRI has flexibility in the research it does, and this could complement the work done by agencies within the UN system.

The meeting participants had a productive discussion on priorities they would like to pursue, and recommendations for the Global Strategy.

Recommendations for the work of UN and other agencies with WHO:

- There is a need to identify and map out the work different Organizations are pursuing as it pertains to the Global Strategy (research, advocacy, or otherwise).
  
- There is need for coherence in two areas:
  1. How can the UN and other agencies work together to improve the health of populations through better, healthier nutrition and physical activity?
  2. The issue of the coexistence of overnutrition and undernutrition within same households and communities – what are the trade-offs versus the opportunities?
  
- Research needs include:
  1. Priorities should be set for research on food and nutrition policy.
  2. Selected modelling scenarios should include:
    - fruit and vegetables
    - fish
    - sugar
    - edible oil.
  3. Prices, taxes and incentives to facilitate healthy diets and physical activity.
  4. Information on behaviour change.
  5. Physical activity, especially in schools.
  6. National nutrition policies: Do the recommendations therein coincide with international guidelines (TRS 916) and UN policies?
  7. Are national nutrition policies being funded and implemented?