



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 26 June 2017
(OR. en)

10679/17

DEVGEN 153
COHAFA 49
ACP 72
RELEX 571
ALIM 9
AGRI 359
FAO 19
SAN 267

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
On: 26 June 2017
To: Delegations

No. prev. doc.: 10457/17

Subject: Second Progress Report on the Action Plan on Nutrition
- Council conclusions (26 June 2017)

Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on the Second Progress Report on the Action Plan on Nutrition, as adopted by the Council at its 3554th meeting held on 26 June 2017.

Council Conclusions on the Second Progress Report on the Action Plan on Nutrition

1. Recognising that malnutrition in all its forms constitutes one of the major global challenges in the fight against poverty and growing inequality, and as reaffirmed in the new European Consensus on Development¹, the Council recalls the EU's and the Member States' firm commitment to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition, in line with SDG2 of the 2030 Agenda. The Council recalls in this context its previous relevant conclusions² and reaffirms the continued relevance of the Action Plan on Nutrition and of its three strategic priorities to enhance mobilisation and political commitment for nutrition, to scale up actions at country level, and to improve knowledge for nutrition.
2. The Council takes note of the substantial progress made to improve nutrition globally, but remains extremely concerned by the fact that still 155 million children under the age of five are stunted today.
3. The Council welcomes the Second Progress Report on the Commission's Action Plan on Nutrition³ and the evidence presented of the active work undertaken to attain the EU's commitments on nutrition. In particular, the Council commends the Commission's instrumental efforts in promoting the nutrition agenda at global and at partner country levels as well as the substantial increases in the scope of its interventions and funding, including the progress made in meeting its financial commitment to invest EUR 3.5 billion in nutrition between 2014 to 2020, with EUR 1.8 billion already allocated to nutrition programmes between 2014 and 2016⁴.

¹ 10108/17.

² Conclusions on Food and Nutrition Security in External Assistance (9328/13); Conclusions on the Action Plan on Nutrition (16857/14); Conclusions on the first biennial report on implementing EU food and nutrition security policy commitments (9141/15); Conclusions on food and nutrition security (10392/16).

³ 10410/17 - SWD(2017) 239 final.

⁴ For 2016 the results are still preliminary.

4. The Council notes with satisfaction that an additional one million children have been averted from stunting by 2025 in the Commission's prioritised countries for nutrition. This is double last year's calculation and represents very satisfactory progress. However, the Council recognises that the current pace of stunting reduction will still be insufficient to meet global stunting reduction objectives by 2025⁵. The Council calls upon the Commission to keep up its efforts to honour its financial commitments and to step up the support it provides to partner countries in reducing stunting by at least 7 million by 2025.
5. The Council calls on the Commission to pursue its active role at the global level through the Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Lead Group and forthcoming high-level events, including the high-level event on Nutrition in Milan on 4 November 2017. In addition, the Council welcomes the fact that the EU has now taken up the role as SUN donor lead in nine⁶ countries while actively participating in the SUN movement in an additional 28 of the 42 EU priority countries for nutrition. At the same time, the Council encourages Member States that are not currently engaged in the SUN movement or with Nutrition for Growth commitments to engage more on ensuring the nutrition sensitivity of their priority engagements where feasible. The Council recognises that the global architecture for nutrition remains fragmented and encourages all relevant actors, including relevant UN agencies and bodies, to work towards a common understanding of the different global nutrition initiatives (SUN, the Decade of Action on Nutrition, The Committee on World Food Security - CFS, The United Nations Systems Standing Committee on Nutrition - UNSCN), based on their respective roles and division of labour.

⁵ The first of the World Health Assembly targets is a '40% reduction of the global number of children under five who are stunted'. It implies a global reduction of about 70 million stunted children (from 171 million in 2010 to approximately 103 million in 2025).

⁶ Burkina Faso, Burundi (though operations are currently suspended), Chad, Lao PDR, Malawi, Mozambique, Niger, Yemen and Zimbabwe.

6. The Council calls on the EU and its Member States to keep nutrition at the forefront of the EU's development cooperation agenda and welcomes the strengthened coordination between the Commission and Member States in defining nutrition priorities and programmes, while stressing the need for country ownership and alignment to country plans. The Council also encourages further work on Policy Coherence for Development and closer collaboration on Joint Programming where appropriate, as well as on tracking resources and on monitoring of impact.

7. The Council is deeply concerned by the situation of famine that prevails in several countries in East Africa, Yemen and north-east Nigeria and South Sudan and underscores that humanitarian emergencies can have a profound and lasting negative impact on children, adolescent girls and women in reproductive age. With undernutrition at the core of many crises, a nutrition-sensitive approach to both developmental and humanitarian assistance is fundamental to saving the lives and strengthening the resilience of affected populations. The Council reaffirms the importance of addressing malnutrition in all its forms holistically, tackling both the causes and symptoms of malnutrition, and stresses the need to enhance coordination between relief and development efforts, notably across the humanitarian-development nexus. As emphasised in its conclusions on Operationalising the Humanitarian-Development Nexus⁷, the Council encourages increased use by humanitarian and development actors of joined-up integrated approaches. Against this background, the fight against stunting should be a key element of combined approaches in protracted crises. The Council also underlines the importance of school feeding programmes that can help deliver multiple benefits in support of childhood education and nutrition.

⁷ 9383/17.

8. The Council acknowledges the crucial role of women and girls in society, specifically in agriculture where at least 50% of small holder farmers are women, and that gender inequality remains a barrier to nutrition. Particular focus should be put on gender-sensitive interventions and policies. Sustainable and inclusive development necessitates that both undernutrition and gender inequalities must be addressed together to ensure the effectiveness of investments as a whole. The Council commends recognition of the strategic value of stunting reduction as a key indicator to assess the benefits of growth and its inclusiveness. Going forward, the Council encourages the use of a minimum dietary diversity score for women (MDD-W) in the Commission's and Member States' programming for nutrition through agricultural and food systems interventions, as it offers a concrete means to tackle nutrition and gender inequalities in the context of external assistance, across funding instruments and sectors.

9. The Council stresses the importance of working with civil society, farmer organisations and the private sector, including through national multi-stakeholder nutrition platforms, and of aligning collective efforts around costed national action plans on nutrition. Appropriate legislation and regulatory frameworks and mechanisms are crucial to ensure that nutrition is upheld by partner countries as a national priority integrated in national budgets and requiring increased domestic resource mobilisation, in line with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The Council endorses the progress already being made in leveraging the private sector through EU investments in food fortification, and urges the Commission to continue this work, through private sector engagement in the agriculture sector by promoting inclusive and nutrition-sensitive value chains, in a transparent and accountable manner in line with development effectiveness principles.

10. The Council calls upon the Commission to continue and to provide yearly progress reports on monitoring the implementation of the Action Plan on Nutrition as well as to ensure continued analysis of progress made against the Nutrition for Growth financial commitments by using the common resource-tracking methodology agreed among the donors of SUN⁸ in 2013. The Council calls upon the Commission to develop a methodology that will improve the understanding of what is the impact of EU funding alone on stunting reduction at country level in the priority countries, and to showcase the results in the Third Progress Report.
11. The Council also invites Member States, in particular those that made commitments in the Nutrition for Growth Compact of 2013, to keep on reporting regularly on their financial commitments through the Global Nutrition Report (GNR). The Council also calls on the Commission to continue supporting the work on the GNR.
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⁸ See paragraph 20: <http://scalingupnutrition.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/140417-State-of-the-SUN-Movement-Progress-Report-ENG.pdf>