



Council of the
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NOTE

From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Council Conclusions on the Action Plan on Nutrition

At its meeting on 12 December 2014, the Council (Foreign Affairs/Development) adopted the Conclusions set out in the Annex to this note.

**Council Conclusions on
the Action Plan on Nutrition**

1. The Council recalls its Conclusions of 28 May 2013, which endorsed the Communication "Enhancing Maternal and Child Nutrition in External Assistance: an EU policy Framework"¹ and invited the Commission to develop an Action Plan setting out how to deliver on its stunting target.

Introduction

2. The Council reemphasises its concern at the persistent levels of malnutrition, especially in developing countries, where States are faced by the triple burden of under-nutrition, overnutrition and micro-nutrient deficiencies. The complex and multidimensional causes of malnutrition require a holistic and human rights-based approach, with a particular focus on women and children. The Council reaffirms the importance of strengthening synergies between humanitarian and development actors and welcomes ongoing efforts in this regard. In particular the Council encourages the adoption of approaches that build resilience at all levels, bearing in mind the Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis Prone Countries 2013-2020 linking the resilience agenda and the piloting of the New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States.
3. The Council recognises that hunger and malnutrition are both a cause and a consequence of underdevelopment. Malnutrition poses a serious threat to social development and economic growth. On the other hand, investing in nutrition provides positive social, economic and productivity returns. Malnutrition constitutes one of the major current global challenges that the international community faces in its fight against poverty, increasing inequality and social exclusion.

¹ Doc. 7521/13

4. The Council therefore calls on the EU and its Member States to support efforts by partner countries facing a high malnutrition burden to place food and nutrition security high on the political agenda. In this regard the Council also calls for particular attention to and comprehensive consideration of food security and improved nutrition in the post-2015 framework, noting the proposals in this regard contained in the report of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals. Nutrition interventions should seek to address the broader dimension of malnutrition, including overweight and diet related non communicable diseases. The promotion of international standards on safe and secure food should also be prioritised.
5. The Council encourages all the relevant stakeholders to play their respective role in the effective implementation of the commitments of the Rome Declaration on Nutrition through its associated Framework for Action, adopted at the 2014 Second International Conference on Nutrition. These documents will usefully feed into the discussions in the context of the post 2015 framework. Endorsed by the EU and its Member States, the Framework provides a set of recommended actions conducive to eradicating hunger and preventing all forms of malnutrition worldwide, including the attainment of the global nutrition targets set by the World Health Assembly for 2025.

Commission Staff Working Document "Action Plan on Nutrition"

6. The Council welcomes the presentation by the Commission of the Action Plan on Nutrition,² which focuses on undernutrition and sets out how the EU can best support partner countries including in meeting the Commission target of reducing the number of chronic undernourished children under the age of five years by at least 7 million by 2025.

² Doc. 11718/14

7. The Council recognises that achieving the World Health Assembly (WHA) target of reducing global stunting by 40% by 2025 (i.e. about 70 million children) implies scaling up our efforts significantly. The Council therefore welcomes the emphasis of the Nutrition Action Plan on the need to increase the current annual stunting reduction rate beyond current trends so that the above mentioned WHA target is attained by 2025. In this context the Council also welcomes the pledges of increased investment in nutrition by the Commission and some Member States through the 2013 Nutrition for Growth compact and other fora.
8. The Council emphasises the need to tackle both the underlying and immediate causes of undernutrition, with a particular focus on women and children. In this regard, the Council welcomes the commitment of the Commission and some Member States to implement nutrition-sensitive interventions across all relevant sectors, by integrating nutrition indicators and objectives into, inter alia, agriculture and food security, health, social protection, water and sanitation as well as education programmes, together with nutrition specific programmes which address the immediate causes and consequences of undernutrition.
9. Under-nutrition is a major factor behind the high prevalence of child morbidity and mortality and an obstacle to the full cognitive and physical development of those children who survive it. The Council therefore welcomes the specific focus of the Nutrition Action Plan on interventions and policies targeted at women and children, notably within the critical 1,000 day window of opportunity, i.e. good nutrition for pregnant women and until the second year of the child, and by prioritising women, children and adolescent girls, especially in poor rural areas and among the most vulnerable groups. The importance of breastfeeding of infants as part of nutrition specific interventions should be highlighted. The Council notes that the specific focus of the Nutrition Action Plan will be: (a) to enhance mobilisation and political commitment to nutrition; (b) to scale up actions at country level and (c) to increase knowledge of nutrition.

10. In this context, the Council welcomes the commitment of the Commission and a number of Member States to scale up actions at country level in the 2014-2020 period. The envisaged interventions should be gender sensitive, especially aiming at women and their empowerment, and should be designed to achieve the highest impact on reducing stunting and addressing its underlying causes; they should build capacity, knowledge and skills, they should reinforce and leverage expertise, investments and contributions from local stakeholders, governments, the private sector, knowledge institutes and NGOs.
11. Actions to strengthen national leadership, governance and ownership of nutrition objectives require EU Delegations and the representations of EU Member States to engage further in policy dialogue and to support national and regional processes. EU Joint programming provides a sound framework for better coordinating nutrition interventions as well as for supporting partner countries to define and implement national nutrition policies, particularly in countries with a high stunting burden, where there is a need and potential for common advocacy and action. The Council welcomes the commitment in the Action Plan to ensure synergy and coherence between country-owned policies and programmes on the one hand, and regional and international initiatives on the other hand.
12. The Council encourages the alignment of Member States interventions to existing national strategies of partner countries and close coordination with the Commission's Nutrition Action Plan and other international initiatives. Existing coordination mechanisms, such as the SUN movement and the Committee on World Food Security, should be reinforced. Consideration should be given to the work of other relevant UN committees such as the Standing Committee on Nutrition. In particular the Council welcomes the fact that 54 countries with high burdens of under-nutrition have now joined the SUN movement and are demonstrating political commitment to improve nutrition.

13. As part of the Action Plan the Council supports the Commission proposal to develop country fiches showing expected outcomes. Nutrition objectives should be consistently incorporated in programme design while nutrition criteria and indicators should be included and monitored. Moreover, the Council supports the Commission intention to strengthen national information management systems for nutrition, providing accountability for and communication of results to assess the impact, also at field level, of the Action Plan. The information generated may also serve to contribute results to the annual Global Nutrition Report. Accurate data at country level will support decision-making, resource allocation and policy development by national authorities in addition to providing accountability for and communication of results arising from the implementation of the Action Plan, at global and country level.
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