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Follow-up to the Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2)

Executive Summary

- The Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), successfully held in Rome on 19-21 November 2014, adopted by acclamation its two outcome documents, the Rome Declaration on Nutrition and its companion Framework for Action.
- Besides providing background information on the ICN2 proceedings and outcomes, this document outlines follow-up action taken since ICN2, including efforts aimed at: (i) mainstreaming nutrition within the Strategic Framework of FAO; (ii) strengthening FAO's capacities on nutrition and food systems; (iii) reporting on ICN2 follow-up activities to FAO's Governing Bodies; (iv) ensuring UN General Assembly support of the ICN2 outcomes; and (v) improving inter-agency coordination and collaboration on nutrition.
- The Conference may wish to call on resource partners to make voluntary contributions to support FAO's nutrition work in the Region.

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I. Background

1. The Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2), co-hosted by FAO and the World Health Organization (WHO), was successfully held from 19 to 21 November 2014 at the Headquarters of FAO in Rome. A high-level political event, ICN2 was the first global intergovernmental forum devoted to addressing the world's nutrition problems in the 21st century.

2. ICN2 was convened to: (i) review progress made since the 1992 International Conference on Nutrition, respond to new challenges and opportunities, and identify policy options for improving nutrition; (ii) bring food, agriculture, health and other sectors together and align their sectoral policies to improve nutrition in a sustainable manner; (iii) propose adaptable policy options and institutional frameworks that can adequately address major nutrition challenges in the foreseeable future; (iv) encourage greater political and policy coherence, alignment, coordination and cooperation among food, agriculture, health and other sectors; (v) mobilize the political will and resources to improve nutrition; and (vi) identify priorities for international cooperation on nutrition in the near and medium terms.

3. In December 2013, the FAO Council requested the ICN2 Joint Secretariat to develop a roadmap for an intergovernmental process and for consultations with civil society and private sector organizations, and encouraged it to prepare a zero draft of the Conference outcome document. In January 2014, the WHO Executive Board further requested the Directors-General of WHO and FAO to: (i) set up a Joint Working Group (JWG) of FAO and WHO Members to prepare the draft outcome documents; and (ii) consider convening a meeting of an Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) for the finalization of the outcome documents.

4. Thus, the JWG was tasked to prepare a draft political outcome document and a draft framework for action, in cooperation with the ICN2 Joint Secretariat. From March to September 2014, the JWG held monthly meetings through video conferencing between Geneva and Rome. Subsequently, a face-to-face meeting of the OEWG took place, in two parts, in Geneva in September 2014 and in Rome in October 2014. Negotiation of the Conference outcome documents was completed during this meeting, and consensus was reached on the full text of the Rome Declaration on Nutrition and the Framework for Action.

5. United Nations partners, other international organizations, civil society, research community, academia and private sector organizations were consulted on the ICN2 outcome documents through various web-based public consultations. They also took part in the meeting of the OEWG.

6. To encourage consideration of regional perspectives in the Conference outcome documents, an information note on ICN2 was presented to the five Regional Conferences of FAO in 2014, namely: the 32nd Regional Conference for the Near East; the 32nd Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific; the 28th Regional Conference for Africa; the 29th Regional Conference for Europe; and the 33rd Regional Conference for Latin America and the Caribbean.

II. ICN2 proceedings

7. A total of 164 Members of FAO and WHO, including 162 Member States, one Associate Member and the European Union, as well as three observers, were in attendance at ICN2. Besides special guests, over 2200 persons participated in the Conference, including 85 Ministers, 23 Vice-Ministers, 82 Ambassadors and 114 other high-level government officials. Accredited observers included 27 United Nations and other intergovernmental organizations, as well as 164 civil society and private sector organizations. Special guests included His Holiness Pope Francis, His Majesty King Letsie III of Lesotho, Her Majesty Queen Letizia of Spain, and Her Royal Highness Princess Haya bint Al Hussein.¹

8. At the opening session, the Conference adopted by acclamation the Rome Declaration on Nutrition and its companion Framework for Action. The Conference included five plenary sessions,

¹ *Report of the Joint FAO/WHO Secretariat on the Conference*, December 2014 (www.fao.org/3/a-mm531e.pdf).

three thematic roundtables and nine side events. The roundtables covered the following themes: (i) Nutrition in the Post-2015 Development Agenda; (ii) Improving Policy Coherence for Nutrition, with three panel discussions addressing: coherence between economic policies and healthy changes in diets; policy coherence for nutrition-sensitive agriculture; and nutrition in all sectors; and (iii) Governance and Accountability for Nutrition, with two panel discussions addressing: nutrition governance; and nutrition accountability.

9. The topics of the nine side events were as follows: (i) targets and accountability for nutrition and the Post-2015 Development Agenda; (ii) Global Nutrition Report and Global Hunger Index; (iii) Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement and accountability for nutrition; (iv) agricultural policies and food systems for improved nutrition; (v) healthy children, growing societies: the UN nutrition networks' support to countries' stunting reduction efforts; (vi) addressing overweight and obesity; (vii) transition from safety net programs to comprehensive social protection systems: food security and nutrition perspective; (viii) promoting and achieving the Zero Hunger Challenge: UN at Expo Milano 2015 and South-South cooperation in Latin America and the Caribbean; and (ix) food safety: a right or a privilege? Why food safety is an essential element of food and nutrition security.

10. In addition to the main events, the Conference was preceded by three special events which took place in Rome, outside FAO premises, namely: (i) a meeting of civil society organizations on 17-18 November 2014; (ii) a meeting of private sector representatives on 18 November 2014; and (iii) a meeting of parliamentarians on 18 November 2014. The outcomes of these three special events were reported to the Conference at the closing session.

III. ICN2 outcomes

11. By adopting the Rome Declaration on Nutrition and the Framework for Action, world leaders renewed their commitment to establish and implement policies aimed at eradicating malnutrition and transforming food systems to make nutritious diets available to all.

Rome Declaration on Nutrition²

12. The Rome Declaration on Nutrition first acknowledges the multiple challenges of malnutrition to inclusive and sustainable development and to health. Then it sets out a common vision for global action to end all forms of malnutrition. Finally it lays down 10 specific commitments to action for addressing malnutrition in the coming decades, as outlined below:

- a) Eradicate hunger and prevent all forms of malnutrition worldwide;
- b) Increase investments for effective interventions and actions to improve people's diets and nutrition;
- c) Enhance sustainable food systems by developing coherent public policies from production to consumption and across relevant sectors;
- d) Raise the profile of nutrition within relevant national strategies, policies, action plans and programmes, and align national resources accordingly;
- e) Improve nutrition by strengthening human and institutional capacities through relevant research and development, innovation and appropriate technology transfer;
- f) Strengthen and facilitate contributions and action by all stakeholders, and promote collaboration within and across countries;
- g) Develop policies, programmes and initiatives for ensuring healthy diets throughout the life course;
- h) Empower people and create an enabling environment for making informed choices about food products for healthy dietary practices and appropriate infant and young child feeding practices through improved health and nutrition information and education;
- i) Implement the commitments of the Rome Declaration on Nutrition through the Framework for Action;

² www.fao.org/3/a-ml542e.pdf.

- j) Give due consideration to integrating the vision and commitments of the Rome Declaration on Nutrition into the post-2015 development agenda process, including through a possible related global goal.

Framework for Action³

13. The Framework for Action provides a set of voluntary policy options and strategies, in the form of 60 recommended actions, to guide the implementation of the wide-ranging commitments enshrined in the Rome Declaration on Nutrition. Major messages that emerge from the Framework for Action are as follows:

- a) For effective implementation of policies to improve nutrition, an enabling policy environment is essential. This means explicit political commitment, greater investment, cross-government policies and plans, along with multi-stakeholder governance mechanisms;
- b) Sustainable food systems are key to promoting healthy diets, and innovative food system solutions are needed;
- c) While information and education concerning healthy dietary practices are vital, consumers must also be empowered through enabling food environments that provide safe, diverse and healthy diets;
- d) While a food systems approach is essential, coherent action is also needed in other sectors, including international trade and investment, nutrition education and information, social protection, health system delivery of direct nutrition interventions, and other health services to promote nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, and food safety;
- e) The existing global targets for improving maternal, infant and young child nutrition and for noncommunicable disease risk factor reduction are appropriate for the purposes of accountability.

14. The recommendations in the Framework for Action call for a variety of actions that may be broadly grouped in six clusters as follows:

- a) Creating an enabling environment for effective action (recommendations 1-7);
- b) Increasing actions for sustainable food systems promoting healthy diets (recommendations 8-16);
- c) Achieving global food and nutrition targets through trade and investment policies (recommendations 17-18);
- d) Enhancing social protection, nutrition education and information to build capacities (recommendations 19-24);
- e) Creating strong and resilient health systems to address all forms of malnutrition (recommendations 25-57);
- f) Improving accountability mechanisms for nutrition (recommendations 58-60).

15. Governments have primary responsibility for taking action at country level, in dialogue with relevant stakeholders. According to their specific needs, conditions and priorities, governments will consider the appropriateness of incorporating the recommended policies and actions into their nutrition, health, agriculture, education, development and investment plans. Moreover, the UN system, especially FAO and WHO, and other international and regional organizations, have an important role to play in supporting national and regional efforts aimed at enhancing international cooperation and monitoring follow-up to ICN2.

³ www.fao.org/3/a-mm215e.pdf.

IV. ICN2 follow-up

A. Action within FAO

Mainstreaming nutrition within the Strategic Framework

16. In direct follow-up to ICN2, nutrition has been included as a cross-cutting theme within the reviewed Medium Term Plan 2014-17, under Objective 6 on Technical Quality, Knowledge and Services. The quality and coherence of FAO's work on nutrition is ensured through a new Outcome (6.5), providing indicators and resources for overall technical leadership of FAO's work on nutrition to deliver technical support to Members, through a corporate approach for mainstreaming nutrition across the Strategic Objectives, guided by FAO's nutrition strategy and vision. The Nutrition and Food Systems Division (ESN) coordinates and reports on FAO's work on nutrition through a team comprising representatives from offices and Strategic Objective Core Teams which deal with nutrition-related activities.

17. In this context, several activities in support of the ICN2 outcomes have been implemented in 2015 and are being intensified in this biennium, with a particular focus of the following areas:

- *Enabling environment for effective action:* greater efforts to increase technical assistance to countries and strengthen capacity development on mainstreaming nutrition in sectoral policies and programmes which have an impact on food systems;
- *Sustainable food systems promoting healthy diets:* increased support to countries to update their food and agriculture policies, strategies, investment plans and programmes for nutrition-enhancing food systems through Strategic Objective 4. Additionally, a technical brief is being developed to assist countries to create environments that support healthy diets;
- *International trade and investment:* continued provision of information and analysis to guide the formulation and implementation of trade and investment policies and regulations supportive of improved food consumption patterns and nutritional status;
- *Nutrition education and information:* expanded work in this area by fostering appropriate policy options and developing a package of tools aimed at creating institutional capacities to promote healthy and diversified diets, including supporting countries to develop food-based dietary guidelines;
- *Social protection:* intensified support to countries and partners to mainstream nutrition in social protection and resilience-building policies and programmes through Strategic Objectives 3 and 5, providing technical guidance for enhancing the nutritional impact of social protection programmes.

Strengthening FAO's capacities on nutrition and food systems

18. With a view to attracting the additional resources needed, the Action for Nutrition Trust Fund was established to support governments in transforming the ICN2 commitments into concrete actions. This multi-donor fund is meant to become a conduit in FAO for alignment of un-earmarked or lightly earmarked contributions for nutrition, mobilizing resources for country programmes and projects in support of improved nutrition. In March 2015, the Council encouraged resource partners to make voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund. Thus, a call for voluntary contributions was made by the Director-General in April 2015. The Organization is also using every formal and informal opportunity to encourage resource partners to contribute to the Fund both through their regular funding cycles and through special measures.

19. Dedicated capacity has been strengthened in ESN to help coordinate ICN2 follow-up activities as well as to support implementation of the resource mobilization, management and communication action plan of the Fund, and to ensure adequate planning and operation of projects and programmes.

20. Changes aimed at enabling FAO leadership in nutrition and food systems, which were approved by Council at its 153rd session in 2015, include in particular:
- a) hosting in FAO the UN Standing Committee on Nutrition (SCN), a body that was established in 1977 to facilitate the development of harmonized UN-system policy guidance on key nutrition programming issues. Both FAO and WHO have previously hosted SCN. FAO will resume this responsibility in early 2016;
 - b) aligning FAO's work in a manner that gives increased attention to nutrition by addressing the long-term economic, social and environmental bases of food security and nutrition related to the concept of sustainable food systems and value chains.
21. During the 2016-17 biennium, ICN2-related work will be focused in the following six areas:
- a) support UN-system policy and operational coordination on nutrition;
 - b) support member countries, through the SOs, in implementing the Rome Declaration on Nutrition and Framework for Action;
 - c) monitor and report on the Rome Declaration on Nutrition and Framework for Action, jointly with WHO and in close collaboration with other UN agencies, funds and programmes and other regional organizations;
 - d) collaborate with the relevant SOs to strengthen corporate communication on nutrition and mobilization of resources for implementation of the Rome Declaration on Nutrition and Framework for Action;
 - e) promote the implementation of a set of minimum standards and corporate approach for mainstreaming nutrition in the implementation of the reviewed Strategic Framework;
 - f) contribute to the establishment and maintenance of a corporate food security and nutrition policy intelligence system to strengthen FAO's support to evidence-based policy dialogue at global, regional and national levels.

Reporting to Governing Bodies on ICN2 follow-up

22. At its last session in June 2015, the FAO Conference endorsed the two outcome documents of ICN2. Future sessions of Council and Conference should, as appropriate, continue to receive such reports to ensure continuous oversight on implementation of the ICN2 commitments. Likewise, FAO's Technical Committees could discuss and advise on nutrition matters stemming from implementation of ICN2 recommendations from the perspective of their mandates.

23. In this context, the Regional Conferences are explicitly mentioned in recommendation 60 of the Framework for Action. Thus, a dedicated note on ICN2 follow-up is being submitted to the Regional Conferences taking place over the course of 2016, and such reporting could be maintained in the following biennia as appropriate.

B. Action beyond FAO

UN General Assembly backing of the ICN2 outcomes

24. The Rome Declaration on Nutrition called upon the UN General Assembly to endorse the two outcome documents of ICN2, and to consider declaring a Decade of Action on Nutrition from 2016 to 2025. Accordingly, through Resolution 69/310 of 6 July 2015, entitled *Follow-up to the Second International Conference on Nutrition*, the 69th session of the General Assembly formally welcomed the Rome Declaration on Nutrition and the Framework for Action. It also invited governments, the UN System and other relevant stakeholders to implement the Framework for Action in a coordinated manner so as to achieve better nutrition for all.

25. The main purpose of the Decade of Action on Nutrition would be to translate the ICN2 commitments into coherent and coordinated actions and initiatives by all national governments low and high income that has any type of malnutrition or food systems and the UN System, with clearly set goals and objectives to be achieved in addressing malnutrition worldwide. To facilitate this process, FAO and WHO have submitted a concept note outlining how the Decade would ensure sustained and harmonized actions by stakeholders and would unify nutrition-related initiatives. Additional work by

FAO and WHO on the substantive contents of the proposed Decade of Action on Nutrition is also underway.

26. A discussion of the proposed Decade of Action on Nutrition was called for in the 70th session of the General Assembly. To this end, a second resolution on ICN2 follow-up is expected to be introduced for consideration by the General Assembly.

27. In September 2015, the General Assembly adopted the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*,⁴ a global plan of action for people, planet and prosperity, with 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets, of which 6 goals and 18 targets are of direct relevance to nutrition outcomes. Together, ICN2 and the 2030 Agenda have placed nutrition firmly at the heart of a universal development agenda. The Decade for action is aligned to the UN system follow-up and review process for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Coordination and collaboration efforts on nutrition

28. Efforts to improve UN System coordination on nutrition are based on the strengthening of existing mechanisms. Thus, consideration is given to further enable the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) to serve as the appropriate intergovernmental and multi-stakeholder global forum on nutrition. At its 42nd session in October 2015, CFS discussed its role in advancing nutrition. All CFS constituencies supported this important role to be played by CFS in furthering nutrition within its mandate, by fostering synergies and adding value to ongoing work, such as sustainable food systems and nutrition-sensitive agriculture, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. To this purpose, the CFS formed an Open Ended Working Group on nutrition to enhance CFS's focus on nutrition in its scope and work.

29. Expo Milano 2015, dedicated to “feeding the planet, energy for life”, has served as a valuable advocacy platform to amplify the food security and nutrition messages of ICN2 and to promote its outcomes. FAO has actively participated in a number of nutrition-specific events organized at Expo Milano in 2015, which provided useful opportunities to foster ICN2 messages.

30. The Conference may wish to call on resource partners to make voluntary contributions to support FAO's nutrition work in the Region.

⁴ Through Resolution 70/1, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*.