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Nutrition Security for All”
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Honorable ministers, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen, Good afternoon.

I wish to thank the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway, the Consortium of International Agricultural Research Centers, and the EAT Initiative for hosting this event with WHO. As Director of the Pan American Health Organization, Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization, I am very pleased to be here today.

The Sustainable Development Goal 2, Zero Hunger, challenges the world to end hunger achieve food security and promote sustainable agriculture. This Goal requires that we address the availability, accessibility, use and utilization of food, but also emphasizes stability aspects. It has been said already, too many millions of people are hungry and undernourished, while the world has enough food that all can eat.

WHO considers household food and nutrition security a basic human right.

The underlying causes of nutrition insecurity is rooted in poverty and inequity.

Achieving nutrition security is therefore, inherently linked with the achievement of all of the other sustainable development goals. It will require a holistic approach to development with people at the center.

Unhealthy diets and poor nutrition are leading causes of death, disease and disability, globally. Poor nutrition leads to seemingly contradictory outcomes: obesity and overweight have reached epidemic levels worldwide, affecting both children and adults. At the same time, many countries continue to experience high rates of malnutrition and undernutrition, which stunts children's growth and cognitive development and carries negative consequences well into adulthood.

The good news is that healthier diets are fundamental for reducing both undernutrition and high rates of obesity and diet-related chronic diseases. Even better, such diets can be achieved in an environmentally sustainable manner through progressive agricultural policies.

Making sure that everyone has access to a diet that is nutritionally sound, culturally acceptable and affordable throughout the life course requires strong and coherent policies nationally, regionally and globally and across multiple sectors, including agriculture, food production, distribution, marketing, and the environment. This is, to be sure, a real challenge. However, multi-sectoral collaboration is the key to establishing policies that will halt and reverse these negative trends.

Countries of the Americas are leading the way in promoting dietary patterns that prevent both undernutrition and obesity, while also protecting the environment. A prime example is Brazil's recently released dietary guidelines.

Chile and Ecuador have introduced innovative front of package labelling. Mexico, Barbados and Dominica are imposing new taxes on high sugar content foods. Mexico, Chile and Quebec, in Canada, have placed restrictions on marketing of unhealthy foods and beverages to children and nine countries introduced restrictions on school meals.

Additionally, countries of the Americas took an important step in fighting our region's growing epidemic of overweight and obesity last October by unanimously adopting a 5-years Plan of Action for the Prevention of Obesity in children and Adolescents.

The plan is consistent with the Declaration of Rome and the Framework of Action, which was endorsed by 160 countries during the Second International Conference of Nutrition, ICN2, in Rome last year. It takes a life-course approach, for example, recognizing that breastfeeding of babies sets the stage of healthier dietary practices throughout life.

One of the ICN2's recommendations is to have sustained attention to these issues by declaring a Decade on Nutrition. A Decade on Nutrition will provide an opportunity to leverage the synergies among the Sustainable Development Goals, the NCD Gap and the World Health Assembly nutrition targets.

We need dramatic change and urgent collective action to address nutrition targets and to align them with planetary health. Toward this end, I call on all governments to lead by example by implementing the policies recommended in the ICN2 and set the course for a much healthier future for each and everyone one of us.

Thank you.