



WHA 70

(Geneva, 29 May 2017)

ITALY

WHA 70. COMMITTEE A.

ITEM 15. NONCOMMUNICABLE DISEASES

SUB-ITEM ON

15.1 Preparation for the third High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, to be held in 2018

Thank you Mister Chair.

Italy welcomes the report by the Director General on Preparation for the High-Level meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases, to be held in 2018.

Of course Non-Communicable Diseases represent a very High priority for the International Community and also for our Country and there are many National, Regional and Local initiatives and programs on the prevention and control of NCDs already on track.

We would like to recall here some initiatives adopted in our country: the Programme "Gaining Health", a National Prevention Plan, the Action Plan for reformulation of food started in 2016, in agreement with Industry, and finally the Observatory on food

consumption we are creating right now with a intersectorial and intergovernmental approach.

We are grateful to the Secretariat for the huge and excellent work done for finalizing an updated version of the Appendix 3 to be discussed during this WHA.

In particular we appreciated the call for the importance of strong, robust, and consolidated scientific evidence in guiding policy options and interventions to be implemented as appropriate to National context, without prejudice to the sovereign rights of Nations.

However, Italy cannot endorse the new version of the Appendix 3, due to the approach and the suggested actions in relation to the objective 3 (risk factors) aimed at reducing the impact of NCDs through interventions in the nutrition domain.

Our position is due to methodological reasons.

In fact, the new Annex 3 continues to be focused on interventions targeted to reduce the intake of specific nutrients (salt, sugar, etc.) but does not sufficiently highlights the benefits of a varied and “healthy” diet that does not exclude any food, moderating at the same time the calories intake.

The value of such an approach widely adopted by Mediterranean people is proven, for instance, by the notorious Italian longevity and the recent positive modification in the trend of childhood obesity in our country.

We are concerned on what is stated in the Annex about the fiscal policies, specifically with regard to the option “*reduce sugar consumption through effective taxation on sugar-sweetened beverages*”.

In particular we consider that more detailed, studies and analysis are needed to assess the real impact of fiscal measures such as the taxation of sugar specific nutrients on the reduction of non-communicable chronic diseases, at the moment not sufficiently proven, mainly due to the fact that NCDs have multifactorial causes and are strongly influenced by many and different behaviors of consumers.

Starting from the interventions for the restrictions of the intake of specific nutrients through a taxation of them, it could lead to other dangerous nutritive behaviors and

unhealthy choices by population such as the intake of other categories of junk food, mainly in the lower income socio-economic classes.

All these aspect, in our opinion, should be detailed in the Annex inviting the Policy makers to evaluate them with special regard to local conditions and nutritional tradition where they consider to adopt taxation of any kind of food and beverages as a policy in the framework of a plan of action targeted to the reduction of chronic NCDs.

So, Italy fully supports the amendments on the draft decision proposed by U.S. and invites the Secretariat to review the decision.

Thank you Mr. Chair