

Statement to the 74th World Health Assembly
Agenda item 22.1

Social determinants of health

World Obesity and WCRF International welcome the adoption of Resolution EB148.R2. Access to nutritious food is a key social determinant of health and unhealthy diets are responsible for more premature deaths and more total deaths than any other risk factors globally. We commend WHO's commitment to recognise the need to establish, strengthen and maintain monitoring systems to provide data to assess health inequalities and the impact of policies on SDH at national, regional and global levels. However, we caution a focus solely on food insecurity and urge Member States to take more action to address the commercial determinants of health, for example by strengthening regulation and taxation of unhealthy products.

Policies, partnerships and dialogues relating to nutrition must adopt rigorous principles of engagement to prevent commercial interests from undermining health goals. Accountability mechanisms are needed and all actors, including the private sector, have a role to play in creating a transparent, accountable and democratic food system that delivers nutritious diets for all.

We call on Member States to:

- Adopt a systems-based approach when addressing obesity and diet-related NCDs
- Integrate actions to address malnutrition in all its forms across health, food, transport, water and sanitation, education and economic systems
- Address the commercial determinants of health by implementing policies, including graphic front of package labelling, taxation, regulations and legislation to create health promoting food environments
- Focus on health equity in all policies, to enable all parts of the population to lead healthier lives.

The COVID-19 pandemic exposed vulnerabilities in health and food systems around the world, further reinforcing the risk and impact of poor nutrition and nutrition-related NCDs. Access to healthy, safe, sustainable and nutritious food is a key determinant of health and should be a right, not a privilege.