



# WHO 57<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly

## World Heart Federation Statement Provisional agenda item 12.6: The Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health

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*Mr Chairman, honourable members of the World Health Assembly, Director-General,  
Regional Directors, ladies and gentlemen.*

The following is a joint statement delivered by the International Obesity TaskForce on behalf of the International Association for the Study of Obesity, the International Diabetes Federation and the International Pediatric Association, with the support of two other significant organizations, the International Union of Nutritional Sciences and the World Heart Federation which wish to make separate complementary statements.

Collectively these associations represent the widest range of scientific and medical knowledge on non-communicable disease, public health and nutritional expertise combined with concerned lay members from all parts of the world. Our members have already expressed support for a **strong** global strategy on diet, physical activity and health. A strong strategy is essential in order to address the mounting epidemics of obesity, diabetes and heart disease. A strong strategy is essential to ensure a more effective global culture of care and responsibility for the nutritional health of all children.

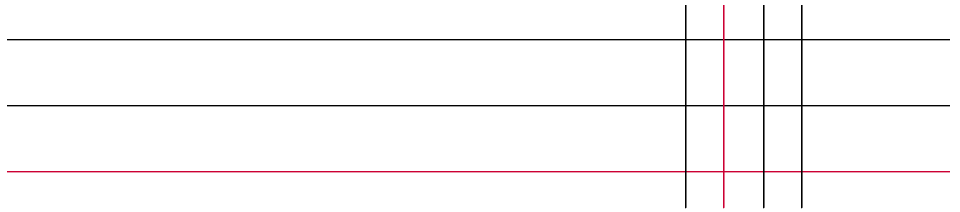
A growing proportion of the population is affected by overweight and obesity, which are powerful determinants of type 2 diabetes and other chronic non-communicable diseases. The International Obesity TaskForce's report to WHO on childhood obesity<sup>1</sup> identifies that 155 million schoolchildren face sustained overweight problems before they reach adulthood. More than one quarter of them are obese.

One in three children born today in the United States is expected to develop type 2 diabetes. A disease once associated exclusively with old age is now increasingly blighting the lives of children. We are witnessing a public health tragedy unfolding as many of the rest of the world's children are following a similar road map to those in the USA.

The forces driving this rapid transformation are not hidden. The US Department of Agriculture has concluded: "A big jump in average calorie intake between 1985 and 2000

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<sup>1</sup> IOTF Childhood Obesity Working Group: Obesity in children and young people: A crisis in public health. Obesity Reviews 2004; 5 (Suppl 1): 4-85.



without a corresponding increase in the level of physical activity (calorie expenditure) is the prime factor behind America's soaring rates of obesity and Type 2 diabetes." Fats and added sugars accounted for half the 300 kcalorie surplus. Fruits and vegetables, the one food category where consumption is recommended to be increased, accounted for only 8 per cent.

This is an issue that no country can afford to ignore. The Food and Agriculture Organization's Agricultural Outlook forecasts a similar 300 kcalorie jump in daily per capita intake across developing and transition countries by 2030.

"Obesity and diabetes" have been adopted as the theme for World Diabetes Day on November 14 2004. A new report on this twin threat to world health has been prepared by the IDF and IASO and will be published next week. This report, entitled ***Time To Act***, recommends that strong measures to improve diet and activity to combat these epidemics are needed including restrictions on marketing targeted at vulnerable children, and careful consideration of the way public expenditure is used in order to switch the emphasis away from the dominance of fats and added sugars in the diet, towards greater consumption of fruit and vegetables. The benefits of doing so are huge, as the World Bank's economists have noted, offering a major boost to the economies of developing countries.

The global strategy is needed to encourage and enable Member States to begin to address the critical diet and physical activity challenges for a new generation and to provide the signposts on the road to better diet, physical activity and health for all. We urge Member States not to hesitate in taking all the necessary steps to achieve his essential goal.

