

WHF Statement on Agenda Item 10 – Protecting Children from the Harmful Impact of Food
Marketing

WPRO Regional Meeting, Brisbane, Australia, 9-13 October 2017

Honourable Chair, distinguished delegates,

The World Heart Federation welcomes the Committee's report. We commend its comprehensive and detailed review of current evidence, policy frameworks and global action to address this issue.

Many WPRO Member States continue to face a double burden of malnutrition, despite commendable progress achieved in recent years.

The marketing of unhealthy foods to children is a key contributor to the obesity epidemic worldwide and in the region: more than 6 million children under 5 years of age are overweight or obese in WPRO countries.¹

Overweight and obesity are both key risk factors for cardiovascular disease (or CVD), and as the report notes, children are particularly susceptible to the marketing of unhealthy foods, with childhood an age at which many health-related behaviours are formed.

In the case of CVD, the cost of inaction greatly exceeds the cost of action.² In 2010 the total costs attributable to CVD in the Western Pacific were \$107.1 billion dollars,³ a figure likely to increase if the obesity epidemic goes unchecked.

Therefore we support the Committee's request to Member States to consider a regional action plan to protect children from the harmful impact of food marketing, as we believe regional cooperation can benefit Member States through sharing of best practices.

Additionally, we call on the governments and the regional office to consider three issues when developing an action plan:

1. **Complement measures to restrict the marketing of unhealthy foods** with taxes on unhealthy foods and beverages that are high in sugar, salt and fat. This intervention can both increase domestic revenue and decrease consumption.
2. **Develop a comprehensive monitoring and accountability framework** to ensure that measures to restrict exposure to marketing are enforced, and to evaluate the impact of these policies.
3. **Include clear guidelines on engagement with the food and beverage industry**, to prevent conflicts of interest or undue influence on policies designed to promote public health.

Thank you for your attention.

¹ World Health Organization, Regional Office for the Western Pacific. Protecting children from the harmful impact of food marketing (2017). Accessed at: http://www.wpro.who.int/about/regional_committee/68/documents/wpr_rc68_5_food_marketing.pdf?ua=1

² http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_Harvard_HE_GlobalEconomicBurdenNonCommunicableDiseases_2011.pdf

³ http://www.wpro.who.int/noncommunicable_diseases/about/NCDRAP_2014-2020_full.pdf?ua=1