

Director-General's Roundtable Meeting
with
Chief Executive Officers and Senior Executives
from Food and Associated Industries

Geneva, 9 May 2003



Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health
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**Director-General/CEOs and senior executives
Roundtable Meeting
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Meeting Note

On 9 May 2003, Director-General Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland hosted the first formal Roundtable meeting between the World Health Organization (WHO) and senior executives from food and associated industries. The Roundtable was attended by CEOs and senior executives from the following companies: Cadbury Schweppes, Coca Cola, Compass Group, Kellogg, McDonald's, Mizunu Corp, Nestle, Pentland Group, Pepsico, Royal Ahold, Unilever, Winterthur and Yum! Brands.

The objective of the meeting was to exchange views and ideas in selected areas of mutual interest and concern. The focus was threefold:

1. *Information sharing* : sharing WHO and industry perspectives on the role of diet and physical activity in combating chronic diseases.
2. *Working across sectors*: considering shared objectives for WHO and the food, beverage, physical activity, insurance and related sectors.
3. *Practical initiatives*: discussing what specific mechanisms could facilitate work between the food, beverage, physical activity, insurance and related sectors and WHO to combat noncommunicable diseases and risk factors.

Dr Brundtland's opening remarks

Dr Brundtland reviewed the current global disease situation and the findings of the World Health Report 2002 in which dietary risks to health and physical inactivity ranked among the top 10 leading risks to health globally. She also described the main findings and recommendations of the newly launched WHO/FAO Expert Consultation Report on diet, nutrition and the prevention of chronic diseases, and gave an update on WHO's ongoing process to develop a global strategy on diet, physical activity and health. Dr Brundtland reiterated WHO's guidelines on interaction with the private sector, which include: safeguarding the integrity of the policy-making process to protect WHO from real or perceived conflict of interests, the importance of transparency and accountability, and the inability of WHO to endorse companies or products.

To catalyse discussion, Dr Brundtland reviewed areas of common ground with the food and associated industries, as well as other issues requiring further discussion. In particular, she emphasized the different approach WHO has to the food industry relative to tobacco. Dr Brundtland asked that the private sector and WHO share experiences and learn from each other to improve health. She stressed that companies' experience in the area of corporate social responsibility (CSR) is key to any action, and that health should be mainstreamed in CSR initiatives, such as the Global Compact.

Industry representatives participated in a lively and productive discussion with WHO on a range of issues related to food, nutrition, scientific research and physical activity. Participants commended WHO for the initiative, reiterating the importance of working across sectors and the need to have a continuing dialogue.

The following Action Points were identified for further discussion:

1. *Marketing, especially to children*, including exploration of what constitutes the optimal mix of self regulation and regulatory mechanisms, and multi-stakeholder approaches for implementing them.
2. *Product Development*, including dialogue on non-proprietary data on products engineered for more 'healthy' choices, as well as increased interaction between WHO and company research and science institutes.
3. *Consumer Education*, including a review of long-term communication initiatives to catalyse desired health behaviours and outcomes related to physical activity and healthy diets, particularly in workplaces and schools.
4. *Labelling and Health Claims*, including a review of the existing evidence on labelling practices, regulations and effectiveness.

The group agreed to further the discussions of WHO and the private sector.