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(Per email)

### **Denmark's comments to the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health**

Denmark appreciates the opportunity to comment on the Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health (EB 113/44, Add. 1). We find the Strategy is essential as a basis for global health promotion and give it our wholehearted support.

Evidence shows that much of the disease burden related to diet and physical inactivity is global. Trade and marketing are international and life style is influenced across borders. The need for global collaboration is urgent in order to handle the global etiology and outcomes of non-communicable diseases.

Denmark fully supports the scientific basis of the Strategy. At an EU chairmanship conference on obesity (Copenhagen, 2002) leading international scientists unanimously agreed that current evidence for an association between lifestyle and obesity is extremely strong and that initiatives of prevention and treatment should be carried out immediately based on existing evidence.

The difference between a strategy and its scientific basis should be born in mind. A strategy is not a scientific document but a document on how to organize and implement recommendations based on scientific and practical experience. The WHO/FAO Technical Report Series 916 forms a scientifically well-balanced basis for the Global WHO Strategy, which with its menu-like offering of tools will be of great support to many countries, including Denmark.

In 2003 Denmark launched a national action plan against obesity. The WHO/FAO Technical Report Series 916 highlights recommendations that are very similar to those that are put forward in the Danish national action plan. The WHO/FAO technical report is also in full accordance with Nordic Experts recommendations regarding diet and nutrition (The Nordic Nutrition Recommendations). The lessons learned from the making of the Danish National Action Plan against Obesity are the importance of consensus with respect to the scientific basis of the plan, the importance of collaboration across sectors and professions, and the importance of combining action and research.

In recent years, Denmark has intensified the work on physical activity and health. Despite great progress in the Danish Strategy to promote active living much is still to be done at different levels and in multiple sectors. The technological development of the global society can and should not be neglected, as physical inactivity in present and future society is a very strong determinant of the global disease burden. In this national work a Global WHO Strategy would be of great support.

In accordance with the Global WHO Strategy the Danish Strategy represents a multidimensional approach involving the responsibility of the society as well as by the individual and we would like to encourage the WHO to put an even stronger emphasis on the need for actions across sectors.

Denmark emphasizes that public strategies and actions are needed to make healthier choices accessible, natural and easier. This is especially important regarding children who cannot make healthy decisions themselves as well as it is important to give special attention to the dietary needs of pregnant women, infants and the elderly. We therefore fully endorse what is stated in paragraphs 10 and 11. In health promotion and public health policy both incentive and restrictive measures are essential. We find the Global WHO Strategy generally well balanced and credible in these aspects and consider the Strategy as an important tool for member states to use in their national strategies.

Denmark agrees that the Global WHO Strategy can promote the right environment and empower people to resume responsibility for their health. The Strategy is a lever that mobilizes countries to form national policies and to create the conditions that motivate and change attitudes and behaviors of the individuals. The provision of accurate and balanced information to all groups of society is essential to the fullest attainment of health. We therefore welcome what is stated in paragraph 35. Denmark also supports that promotion of healthy diet, nutrition and physical activity should be an essential part of training for health professionals as stated in paragraph 27.

Denmark agrees on the need to involve all sectors as stated in paragraphs 26, 32 and 36 and we particularly support the leadership of WHO in consultations with the transnational food industry and other parts of the private sector.

Again, we thank WHO for giving Denmark the opportunity to comment on the Strategy. Denmark will make all the efforts needed to promote healthy diet, physical activity and health in order to reduce non-communicable diseases.