

Poland's Draft Position on WHO Initiative Presented in the Document Entitled „Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health“

Poland welcomes the initiative of WHO with approval and satisfaction. The initiative pertains to undertaking joint actions on a global scale to prevent non-communicable diseases that currently represent a major threat in the highly developed countries and are becoming larger and larger problem in fast developing countries. A need to control a growing trend in the number of incidents and mortality rate caused by non-communicable diseases (NCDs) is obvious. International co-operation is highly desirable. Poland expects that WHO resolution on „Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health“ should be adopted at 2004 World Health Assembly (WHA).

Experience of many countries has shown that the number of incidents and mortality rate caused by diet-related diseases including the cardiovascular diseases may be reduced. A pivotal role plays here the improvement of lifestyle and nutritional pattern. The achievements of Finland are widely known in this area. In Poland between 1991 and 2001 the overall mortality and mortality caused by cardiovascular diseases declined by 30% paralleled by the increase of average life expectancy, which was clearly related to positive changes in nutritional pattern. A pivotal role in the improvement of state of health of the Poles was played by the introduction of market rules in food economy, which increased food availability and widened product range. It is estimated that the propagation of knowledge about healthy nutrition has always played a significant role in changing nutritional habits. The achieved improvement in the area of cardiovascular diseases is, however, only a partial success. Mortality rate caused by diet-related tumour diseases is still growing. The number of overweighted and obese people has been increasing. The problem is the drastic decline in the level of physical activity over the past few decades.

Nutritional mistakes are still detected (too high energy density of the diet, incorrect structure of fatty acids consumed, deficiencies of some nutrients, especially calcium), as well as the incidents of vitamin undernutrition in the population of obese people. Therefore, it is vital to develop a programme of orchestrated preventive measures.

It seems that the development of effective preventive measures without the support of governments is not feasible. The Ministries of Health should play a leading

role in the development of such measures. An effective interdepartmental co-ordination of activities is essential involving, at least, the ministries of health, agriculture, science, education as well as food producers' organisations and consumer associations. The achievements of the world science regarding non-communicable diseases prevention techniques are numerous and provide solid foundations for implementing preventive measures. However, the achievements of science are never complete, particularly in ever-changing environment and living conditions. Therefore, it is necessary to continue the development of scientific research on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases and with sufficient State support.

Poland presents detailed comments on the document:

The strategy may be implemented through planned long-term activities as well as development and consistent pursuing of health-oriented nutritional policy favourable for the improvement of health of the overall society.

In the draft document presented by WHO not enough emphasis was put on an issue of consumer's personal decision about his or her lifestyle and nutrition. The health education supported by the health care sector should come very useful here. It is also necessary to develop a social strategy that would facilitate the selection of health-oriented behaviours. Special weight should be attached to the activities exerting influence on young generation through schools and youth organisations.

A crucial element of the non-communicable diseases prevention strategy is the co-operation with food processing industry, which may play an essential role in the rationalisation of nutrition, which would be beneficial both for the public health and for the industry.

Propagation of healthy lifestyle involves:

- continuous process of educating the general public on the influence of nutritional pattern and optimum influence of physical activity on human health,
- creation of opportunities for conscious choice of foodstuffs with consideration given to individual nutritional needs that may be achieved through proper labelling including the application of nutritional statements,

- development of facilities giving opportunities for undertaking physical activities safely, particularly in small towns and in rural areas.
- constant training and upgrading of qualifications of occupational categories dealing with human health (doctors, nurses, dieticians) and constant dissemination of knowledge to the general public.

Additionally, instead of the proposed wording of the Article 36 proposing the stimulation of price growth in certain product categories through imposing a special tax on them and, on the other hand, subsidizing the production of other food categories we propose to consider using other mechanisms that will allow to attain goals laid down in the Strategy.

Poland, once again, would like to express its approval for the World Health Organisation for the development of „Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity and Health" and supports the WHO initiatives presented in this draft position with consideration given to the comments presented herein.