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Page: 1/2

Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade

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UPDATE FROM THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

STATEMENT BY WHO

This document contains information provided by WHO at the TBT Committee meeting of 21-22 March 2018 under Agenda Item 5 (Observers).

1.1. We have informed this Committee at the number of previous sessions that WHO considers the implementation of **nutrition labelling** as one of the important policy measures for promoting healthy diets to ensure nutritional well-being and prevent obesity and diet-related noncommunicable diseases (NCDs).

1.2. This was reiterated in various global commitments and action plans endorsed by the World Health Assembly (WHA), including:

- the Comprehensive Implementation Plan on Maternal, Infant and Young Child Nutrition which was endorsed together with the Global Nutrition Targets in 2012;
- the Global Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases 2013 – 2020 which was endorsed together with Global NCD targets in 2013;
- the Rome Declaration and Framework for Action adopted by the 2nd International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) in 2014 which served as a basis for the UN General Assembly proclaiming 2016 – 2025 as the Decade of Action for Nutrition; and
- more recently in 2016 the report of the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity which was established by the WHO Director-General.

1.3. WHO also held a technical meeting on nutrition labelling in 2015 which led to the development of guiding principles and framework manual for front-of-pack labelling for promoting healthy diets and they will be field-tested in countries in the South East Asia Region throughout the course of 2018. In addition, a formal guideline development process has started to develop official WHO policy guidelines related to nutrition labelling together with several other priority policy measures to promote healthy diets, such as marketing restriction and fiscal policies (i.e. taxation).

1.4. Various initiatives are being taken also by different Member States in implementing nutrition labelling policies. According to the outcomes of the 2nd Global Nutrition Policy Review which WHO undertook during 2016 – 2017, we observed some transformation happening at the country level and that is increasing number of countries are taking various regulatory actions to promote healthy diets, including the implementation of nutrition labelling policies. In fact, 81% of 158 Member States which provided the response regarding policy actions they are taking to promote healthy diets, reported that they are in fact implementing nutrition labelling policies.

1.5. Furthermore, as part of implementation mechanism under the umbrella of the Decade of Action on Nutrition, France, possibly together with several other Member States, is establishing the Action Network on nutrition labelling to provide a platform to share country experiences, review different policies and types of front-of-pack labelling systems being implemented by countries,

develop common knowledge and share technical expertise to mention just a few. At the regional level too, several Action Networks are being established to promote healthy diets. For instance, the Network for healthy food environments in the Americas is led by Chile together with Brazil and is currently participated by Argentina, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, CARICOM, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay. The Network will provide a platform for collective advocacy and action on proven population-based policies to prevent obesity, such as front-of-pack labelling, restricting the marketing of unhealthy foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children and effective taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages.

1.6. Also in the context of Codex, as informed this Committee at the last session in November 2016, at the 44th Session of Codex Committee on Food Labelling (CCFL) held in Paraguay in October 2017, CCFL had agreed to start a new work to develop guidelines on front-of-pack labelling systems, and to submit the request for undertaking this new work for approval to Codex Alimentarius Commission in July 2018. This was prompted by the fact that currently no Codex guideline or guidance on front-of-pack labelling as such exists. We are happy to inform this Committee that CCFL noted WHO's work on guiding principles for front-of-pack nutrition labelling systems and evidence reviews on nutrition labelling that are being developed as part of the guideline development for promoting healthy diets, be taken into considerations in the development of the Codex guideline, as this will ensure the coherent and harmonized guidance to Member States from both WHO and Codex and will facilitate the effective implementation of critical policy actions to achieve nutrition and health-related Sustainable Development Goals.

1.7. Also at the 44th CCFL, taking into consideration the discussion paper prepared by WHO and with the support of a number of countries particularly from those concerned with increased availability and consumption of alcoholic beverages, CCFL had agreed to develop a discussion paper on issues related to alcoholic beverage labelling (to be led by Russian Federation with support of EU, Ghana, India and Senegal), including the information on the existing state of play in various Member States.

1.8. In WHO, at the World Health Assembly in May 2017, a revised set of priority measures for prevention and control of NCDs was endorsed and these measures also included the measures to reduce the **harmful use of alcohol**. This set of measures encompasses providing consumer information and labelling alcoholic beverages to indicate the harm related to alcohol consumption.

1.9. The 13th General Programme of Work (GPW) which will guide the work of WHO during 2019 – 2023 was reviewed by the WHO Executive Board meeting in January 2018 and will now be forwarded to the World Health Assembly in May 2018 for its final review and endorsement. The 13th GPW states that "WHO will strengthen its public voice – based on science and evidence – and advocate for progress especially in areas of particular importance identified in GPW 13. WHO will speak up against practices from any sector including industry that, based on evidence, are harmful to health. Consistent with its Constitution, WHO will be at the forefront of advocating for the right to health in order to achieve the highest attainable standard of health for all."
