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**Implementation of and follow-up to major United Nations
conferences and summits**

United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to submit to the Economic and Social Council the report of the United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition, pursuant to Council decision 2018/207.

* Reissued for technical reasons on 16 April 2020.



Report of the United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition*

[Original: Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish]

I. Background

1. The complexity and magnitude of malnutrition, in all its forms, requires UN System-wide coherence and coordination in support of Members States' efforts to address the different aspects of the nutritional challenges, both in development and humanitarian settings.

2. Effective inter-agency coordination on nutrition is a long-standing request of Members States. To this end, in 1977, the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) established the Administrative Committee on Coordination of the United Nations (ACC) Sub-Committee on Nutrition (SCN),¹ renamed the United Nations System Standing Committee on Nutrition (UNSCN)² in 2001, with the following mandate:

- to serve as a point of convergence for harmonizing the policies and activities of the United Nations agencies on nutrition;
- to provide initiative in the development and harmonization of concepts, policies, strategies and programmes of the United Nations System response to the nutritional needs of member countries;
- to keep under review the overall direction, scale, coherence and impact of the United Nations System response to the nutrition problems of the world;
- to appraise the United Nations System's experience and progress towards achievement of objectives, and to lay down guidelines for mutually supporting action at inter-agency and country levels.

3. Tackling malnutrition requires a holistic and comprehensive approach that can only be achieved by forging links between nutrition and the numerous other development challenges. Consequently, UNSCN's membership comprises a vast number of United Nations System entities, associate members and observers³ intent on fostering such ties.

4. Reaffirming the importance of coordination on nutrition within the United Nations System, ECOSOC requested that UNSCN submit to the Council, through the

* The present report is being issued without formal editing.

¹ ECOSOC 63rd Session document E/5968 and ECOSOC decision 1977/2107.

² ECOSOC decision 2001/321. Available at: <https://www.un.org/en/ecosoc/docs/2001/decision%202001-321.pdf>.

³ The Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (FAO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food, the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), UN Environmental Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN-DESA), the United Nations High-Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), UN Women, the World Food Programme (WFP), the World Health Organization (WHO) and CGIAR (formerly the Consultative Group for International Agricultural Research) through the Alliance of Bioversity International and CIAT as an associate member. The Committee on World Food Security (CFS) Secretariat and the UN Network for Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN)/REACH Secretariat, and the Global Nutrition Cluster are observers.

Secretary-General, a report on its activities on an annual basis.⁴ The following report recounts the activities undertaken by UNSCN in 2019 and reports on new institutional arrangements for strengthening UN System-wide coordination on nutrition in support to Member States.

II. Strengthened coordination arrangements for nutrition

5. In April 2016, the United Nations Assembly's proclamation of the Decade of Action on Nutrition (2016–2025) presented stakeholders with a unique opportunity to strengthen combined efforts to eradicate global hunger and tackle all forms of malnutrition and help to meet the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030. With just 10 years to achieve these goals, in September 2019, the Secretary-General called on all sectors of society to mobilize for a Decade of Action and accelerate efforts on all levels for the achievements of the SDGs.

6. To respond to the Secretary-General's call and better capitalize on the opportunity presented by the Decade of Action on Nutrition, coordination must become more robust, coherent and streamlined.

7. The Scaling Up Nutrition (SUN) Movement was established in 2010 to propose new ways of working collaboratively to end malnutrition in all its forms.⁵ It convenes 61 countries, governments, civil-society organizations, businesses, donors, researchers and United Nations agencies in a joint effort to scale up nutrition actions and nutrition-sensitive approaches.

8. In June 2013, the Principals of FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the World Health Organization (WHO) established the United Nations Network for SUN (UN Network) as an inter-agency mechanism for country-level coordination, primarily to support countries that had joined the SUN Movement.⁶ All five core agencies of the UN Network are members of UNSCN and sit on the UNSCN Steering Committee.

9. Consequently, within the UN System, two UN bodies currently work to coordinate and harmonize nutrition actions and policies: UNSCN and the UN Network. UNSCN mainly works at global level to promote global policy and advocacy coherence, while the UN Network works at country level to bring greater coherence to national nutrition agendas.

10. In line with the ambitions of United Nations System Reform and to maximize efficiency and effectiveness, the Deputy Chief Executives of FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO have proposed the merger of UNSCN and the UN Network to support, consolidate and boost UN System-wide coordination at global and country level, in support of Member States efforts to improve the nutritional situation of their people.

11. The merger will forge an empowered arrangement for more efficient and effective harmonization of United Nations efforts on nutrition. It will underpin and energize the work now undertaken by UNSCN to link nutrition with United Nations and non-United Nations coordination mechanisms for food security, water, health, climate change, environmental protection and other global and national development challenges. It will help to translate global policies into national strategies, and vice versa, ensuring that on-the-ground realities inform global policy.

⁴ ECOSOC decision 2018/207. Available at: <https://www.unscn.org/en/about/our-rich-history>.

⁵ <https://scalingupnutrition.org>.

⁶ <https://www.unnetworkforsun.org>.

12. Terms of reference have been drafted for this reinforced mechanism, which will eradicate fragmentation, increase harmonization and give coherent and cohesive support to Member States to effect greater change for all. It will act as a forum for United Nations agencies, programmes and funds to leverage their collective strengths, build synergies, identify efficiencies and complementarities and support Member States and partners in delivering results for nutrition.

13. The proposed functions of the combined mechanism build and expand on existing ones, to better serve countries in implementing their commitments to the Decade of Action on Nutrition and the SDGs. They are fully in line with ECOSOC's original mandate to UNSCN and include: (1) aligned advocacy and policy coherence for nutrition, (2) identifying and coordinating strategic and emerging issues around nutrition; (3) promoting knowledge management and innovation; and (4) translating global-level guidance into country-level actions, guidelines and impact.

14. ECOSOC's mandate to UNSCN in 1977 is, thus, more relevant than ever. It has been proposed that the merged coordination mechanism supersedes the UNSCN and UN Network and be called UN Nutrition. Updated terms of reference have been submitted to the agencies' Principals and were approved by all by the 29th of February 2020.

15. Cornelia Richter, Vice-President of IFAD, set the merger in motion as UNSCN Chair through November 2019. She was replaced on an interim basis by WFP Deputy Executive Director Amir Abdulla, who is now charged with bringing the merger to fruition.

16. Pursuant to ECOSOC decision 2018/207, the merged coordination mechanism will assume UNSCN's annual reporting obligations to ECOSOC. The UN Secretary General and his office will be informed and asked to announce the new developments to the Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).

Actions conducted jointly by the UNSCN and UN Network Secretariats

17. To advance the merger, UNSCN and the UN Network intensified their collaboration in 2019. This has aided the identification of country needs to ensure that knowledge products respond accordingly. It has also expanded the reach of these products.

18. The UNSCN and UN Network Secretariats undertook joint communications by expanding UNSCN newsletters and e-alerts to include the UN Network. This has ensured a more coherent United Nations voice on nutrition. UNSCN publications were disseminated to stimulate debate and build capacity. UNSCN's Guidance Note on Integration of Nutrition in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework⁷ (now the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework) was distributed and promoted throughout the UN Network. A joint workplan for 2020 was developed to unite the capacities of the two entities.

III. Update on UNSCN's achievements in 2019

Actions in direct support of the Decade of Action on Nutrition

19. In 2016, United Nations General Assembly Resolution [70/259](#)⁸ called on UNSCN, in its coordinating function, to support the implementation of the Decade of

⁷ UNSCN (2017) *Guidance Note on Integration of Nutrition in the United Nations Development Assistance Framework: A Guidance Note for United Nations Country Teams*. Available at: <https://www.unscn.org/uploads/web/news/document/UNDAFGuidance-EN-WEB.pdf>.

⁸ UN General Assembly 70th session, April 2016, [A/RES/70/259](#).

Action on Nutrition. In 2019, the co-conveners of the Decade, FAO and WHO, worked consistently with other United Nations organizations to facilitate the implementation of actions in line with the Decade's workplan.

20. The UNSCN Secretariat assisted FAO and WHO in their leading and convening roles, fostering commitment to the Decade from a range of UN agencies and other actors. This was done by: (1) promoting the Decade in a variety of forums; (2) collecting, publishing and promoting formal commitments made to the Decade; and (3) assisting the Decade's Secretariat in reporting to the Secretary-General on commitments made by UN family members, as well as their progress on meeting them. UNSCN Member agencies made solid progress on meeting prior commitments to the Decade, demonstrating the complementarity of their mandates and efforts.

21. **FAO** continued to further the critical role of agriculture and food systems in reducing all forms of malnutrition, underpinning the call for food-system transformation by shifting the focus from the production of enough food to ensuring sustainable healthy diets. FAO has started the process of updating its Strategy and Vision for its work on Nutrition, which is expected to: (i) outline its strategic choices and priorities for action, informed by the main nutrition challenges and FAO's comparative advantages (at global, regional and national level); (ii) guide FAO's work to improve nutrition; and (iii) strengthen its impact in delivering FAO's work on nutrition. The Strategy and Vision will be submitted to FAO's Programme Committee in 2020, accompanied by an Implementation Plan detailing how the Strategy will be put into operation, taking into account varying contexts and priorities.⁹

22. FAO has stepped up its efforts to support countries in making healthy diets available to all by building their capacity to develop food-based dietary guidelines and to include diet-quality indicators, such as the Minimum Dietary Diversity for Women index, in their nutrition monitoring frameworks. To this end, FAO's forty-fifth Council session endorsed the biennial theme, "promoting healthy diets and preventing all forms of malnutrition", for 2020–2021. In addition, in 2019, FAO published the FAO School Food and Nutrition Framework¹⁰ to guide FAO's work in supporting Member States in developing, transforming or strengthening school-based policies and programmes and the FAO Framework for the Urban Food Agenda¹¹ to guide FAO's work in supporting decision makers in recognizing the key role of cities and sub-national governments as strategic actors in addressing the complex socioeconomic and ecological issues constraining food security and nutrition.

23. Lastly, the 2019 issue of FAO's flagship publication, *The State of Food and Agriculture*,¹² focused on food loss and waste, providing new estimates of the world's food, from harvest up to, but excluding, retail level. *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2019*¹³ was jointly prepared by FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO to inform on progress towards ending hunger, achieving food security and improving nutrition and to provide in-depth analysis of the key challenges to achieving this goal in the context of the 2030 Agenda.

⁹ FAO (2019) *Progress on updating the Strategy on Nutrition*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/nb124en/nb124en.pdf>.

¹⁰ FAO (2019) *FAO School Food and Nutrition Framework*. Available at: www.fao.org/3/ca4091en/ca4091en.pdf.

¹¹ FAO (2019) *FAO framework for the Urban Food Agenda Leveraging sub-national and local government action to ensure sustainable food systems and improved nutrition*. Available at: www.fao.org/3/CA3151EN/ca3151en.pdf.

¹² FAO (2019) *The State of Food and Agriculture 2019: Moving forward on food loss and waste reduction*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/publications/sofa/en/>.

¹³ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO (2019) *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2019. Safeguarding against economic slowdowns and downturns*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca5162en/ca5162en.pdf>.

24. **The International Atomic Energy Agency's (IAEA)** contribution to the Decade of Action on Nutrition focused on strengthening collective action between organizations, countries and communities to tackle the double burden of malnutrition. For the first time ever, IAEA, WHO and UNICEF joined forces for a major International Symposium on Understanding the Double Burden of Malnutrition for Effective Interventions,¹⁴ attended by more than 460 scientists, health and nutrition professionals, policymakers and representatives from academia, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society. The symposium focused on how a wealth of knowledge on biology and nutritional assessment methods could inform effective interventions and policies. It served as a platform for participants from 89 countries to share experiences and learn about new ways of measuring malnutrition and how to assess the impact of interventions using tools such as stable isotopes. The event was a chance to discuss and identify concrete actions to secure nutrition commitments in the context of the Decade. This work was reinforced by the launch of the IAEA's Doubly Labelled Water (DLW) Database.¹⁵ By sharing data on energy expenditure, the database will help countries devise better policies to combat the growing global obesity epidemic. Strategic opportunities and actions arising from discussions were disseminated in the *Annals of Nutrition and Metabolism*.¹⁶

25. **IFAD's** contribution to the Decade of Action on Nutrition is high on its corporate agenda. In its eleventh replenishment, IFAD committed to improve the nutrition of 12 million people by 2021 and to increase its target for nutritionally sensitive-designed projects to 50 percent by 2021.¹⁷ Consequently, in 2019, IFAD developed its new Nutrition Action Plan (NAP) 2019–2025,¹⁸ with the overall objective of improving the contribution of IFAD investments to nutrition. IFAD will do this by way of five mutually supportive action areas:

- (a) nutrition-sensitive Country Strategic Opportunity Programmes (COSOPs) and projects
- (b) capacity to implement
- (c) policy influence, engagement and partnerships
- (d) knowledge, communications and evidence
- (e) human and financial resources

26. Over the course of 2019, 60 per cent of new projects approved for financing by IFAD's Executive Board were nutrition-sensitive in design, surpassing its target. IFAD revised its nutrition mainstreaming criteria to make them clearer and more accurate and honed its nutrition monitoring indicators to gauge its contribution to better nutrition. It also published a to-do note on how to mainstream nutrition in its investments, offering a set of resources, tools and methods and including references to key sources of data. IFAD organized three regional capacity-building workshops¹⁹ on nutrition-sensitive agriculture and rural development and provided technical

¹⁴ See <https://www.iaea.org/events/understanding-the-double-burden-of-malnutrition-symposium-2018>.

¹⁵ The IAEA DLW Database is a collection of daily energy expenditure measurements made using the stable isotope method of doubly labelled water analysis. It currently includes data from more than 20 countries. See <https://doubly-labelled-water-database.iaea.org/home> for more.

¹⁶ <https://www.karger.com/Journal/Home/223977>.

¹⁷ A nutrition-sensitive project has explicit nutrition objectives, activities and indicators.

¹⁸ The IFAD Nutrition Action Plan: <https://www.ifad.org/en/document-detail/asset/41237860>.

¹⁹ IFAD action area 2 (*Contributing to strengthened capacity in nutrition-sensitive agriculture*) contributes to Nutrition Decade action areas 1, 3, 4 and 5.

assistance to COSOP development, project design and implementation in five countries (Bangladesh, Burkina Faso, the Niger, Nigeria and Viet Nam).

27. Together with Bioversity International, IFAD disseminated its two-volume guide on how to design nutrition-sensitive value chain (NSVC) projects.²⁰ The guide walks through NSVC project design, noting practical resources to be used at each step of the design process. Again with Bioversity, IFAD developed and launched an operational framework²¹ to outline how to improve nutrition by incorporating neglected and underutilized species in nutrition-sensitive agricultural projects. The framework sets out how using a diversified range of crop species and varieties can put nutrition back in our food production systems.

28. IFAD has further strengthened its engagement in global policy to achieve SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) by 2030 through high-level involvement in key international nutrition events. In 2019, its President participated in the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), contributing to two TICAD initiatives: the Coalition for African Rice Development and the Initiative for Food and Nutrition Security in Africa.

29. **UNICEF**, with nutrition programmes in more than 120 countries, has been supporting the Decade of Action on Nutrition through the implementation of the UNICEF Strategic Plan 2018–2021. By providing technical, financial and programmatic support to national governments and partners, UNICEF supports advocacy, policies, strategies and programmes to improve the nutrition situation of children, adolescents and women. UNICEF focuses on prevention first, but when prevention efforts fail, provides life-saving care to those most in need. In 2019, UNICEF reached more than 300 million children under the age of five with services to prevent stunting and other forms of malnutrition, more than 55 million adolescents with services to prevent anemia and other forms of malnutrition, and more than 4.9 million children with services for the early detection and treatment of severe acute malnutrition.²²

30. In addition to delivering emergency nutrition services to children and women in countries affected by humanitarian crises, UNICEF supported interventions including the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding in children under two years (112 countries); to improve the quality of young children's diet and feeding practices (102 countries), including the use of multiple micronutrient powders (50 countries); micronutrient supplementation for children under five, including vitamin A supplementation (77 countries) and deworming (58 countries) programmes; counselling and support for pregnant women and lactating mothers (95 countries); to improve the nutrition of school-age children (35 countries) and adolescents (20 countries); to prevent childhood overweight and obesity (33 countries); and timely and quality treatment for severely wasted children in development and humanitarian contexts (73 countries). UNICEF also maintained its role as the Cluster Lead Agency for Nutrition in 2019.

31. In 2019, UNICEF's flagship report, *The State of the World's Children*,²³ focused on children, food and nutrition. The report drew attention to the fact that one in every

²⁰ The guide is available in English, French and Spanish, including a short video featuring the guide. <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/knowledge/publication/asset/40805038>.

²¹ Padulosi S., Roy, P. & Rosado-May, F.J. (2019) *Supporting Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture through Neglected and Underutilized Species – Operational Framework*. Bioversity International and IFAD. Available in English, French and Spanish at: <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/knowledge/publication/asset/41245090>.

²² UNICEF's internal reporting systems: Strategic Monitoring Questions and NutriDash.

²³ UNICEF (2019) *The State of the World's Children 2019. Children, food and nutrition: Growing well in a changing world*. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/reports/state-of-worlds-children-2019>.

three children is not growing due to malnutrition, while two in three are not fed the minimum diverse diet they need to grow healthily. It urged countries to secure food systems to deliver nutritious, safe, affordable and sustainable diets for all children. In 2019, UNICEF also published its *Programme Guidance on Prevention of Overweight and Obesity in Children and Adolescents* and its *Programme Guidance on Engagement with Business*, and developed the UNICEF Nutrition Strategy 2020–2030, to be launched in 2020, to guide the agency’s work for the next decade.

32. **WFP**, with its deep-rooted field presence, played a critical role in supporting governments and partners in advancing the implementation of the Decade of Action. Its nutrition investments were guided by its Nutrition Policy (2017–2021) and Action Plan (2017). With a strong focus on nutritious diets, WFP continued to provide emergency response and optimal nutrition programming on treatment and prevention while integrating nutrition-sensitive approaches across the humanitarian–development nexus, investing in digital transformation and forming partnerships across the public and private sectors.

33. Thanks to its collaboration with governments, partners and communities, in 2019, WFP assisted 86.7 million people in 83 countries through diverse programmes, including nutrition, school meals, resilience activities and capacity-strengthening in both development and humanitarian contexts. It reached nearly 16 million of these beneficiaries in 59 countries with prevention and treatment programmes for malnutrition.²⁴ Eighty-six percent of them were in emergency and fragile settings (the majority in Somalia, South Sudan and Yemen). More than 8 million beneficiaries benefited from programmes to treat moderate acute malnutrition and 6 million were reached by prevention programmes. WFP’s efforts to prevent stunting have been focused on promoting healthy diets in the first 1,000 days, through both nutrition-specific and nutrition-sensitive interventions. Some 1.2 million beneficiaries were reached through food-based interventions in 22 countries over the same period.

34. WFP has been fostering a culture of innovation, adopting new digital technologies and developing new tools. In 2018, it developed SCOPE CODA, for example, a platform to merge identity management with treatment records to register, track and improve the treatment of malnutrition. The tool has since been piloted in South Sudan, Tajikistan and Uganda. In Congo, it launched MEZA, a tool to quickly collect nutrition and related health data from remote, low-resource clinics. WFP launched its Nutrition’s Digital Learning Platform in 2019 to share its experience and research on nutrition with external stakeholders and partners.

35. Fill the Nutrient Gap is another innovative tool that WFP has developed with partners to improve nutritional situational analysis and decision-making and facilitate the identification of strategies to increase availability, access and choice of nutritious foods to ultimately improve nutrient intake. Fill the Nutrient Gap assessments have been completed in 19 countries where they have informed national policies and action plans, as well as programming by WFP and partners, including refugee-specific programming in Burundi, Rwanda, Uganda and Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh. Coordinated partnerships are a cornerstone of WFP’s engagement in nutrition. It developed a South–South strategy in 2019 to promote knowledge-sharing, strengthen national nutritional capacities and scale up local nutrition innovations.

36. **WHO** has developed normative products to assist countries in implementing their Second International Conference on Nutrition (ICN2) commitments. Using its OneHealth Tool and its repository of interventions for universal health coverage, it is fostering the integration of nutrition into national health policies and programmes by

²⁴ Based on 2018 achievements.

including all essential nutrition actions in health planning and the costing of strategic health-sector plans. The agency recently updated its list of essential nutrition actions.²⁵

37. WHO's other normative products aid countries in assessing and managing children in primary health-care facilities to prevent overweight and obesity: fortifying rice with vitamins and minerals;²⁶ improving adolescent nutrition;²⁷ protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding in facilities offering maternity and new-born services;²⁸ guiding principles on the nutritional labelling of foods; implementation manuals on ending the inappropriate promotion of foods for infants and young children;²⁹ the Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative;³⁰ and tracking progress on meeting targets for 2025.³¹

38. WHO has continued to expand its work in the area of safe and supportive food environments for sustainable healthy diets. It launched REPLACE, a global initiative to eliminate trans-fats from the food supply by 2023, which has drawn commitments to action from 24 countries to date.³² It has developed a methodology for identifying the commercial baby foods available through retailers and collecting data on their nutritional content, as well as various aspects of their packaging, labelling and promotion.³³ WHO is currently undertaking a detailed analysis of school food and nutrition policies, guidelines and standards in around 100 countries with a view to mapping the actions being taken and how countries are ensuring healthy food and nutrition environments in schools.

39. WHO further plans to review examples of country reporting on the impact of international trade and investment policy on national food and beverage environments, consumption patterns and other outcomes, as well as the possible implications for countries' nutrition-related policy response. Furthermore, WHO continues to update its Global Database on the Implementation of Nutrition Action,³⁴ which includes information on nutrition-related policies, actions and monitoring or coordination mechanisms in 201 countries and territories and has supported the

²⁵ WHO (2019) *Essential Nutrition Actions: Mainstreaming nutrition throughout the life-course*. Available at: www.who.int/nutrition/publications/essential-nutrition-actions-2019/en/.

²⁶ WHO (2018) *Fortification of rice with vitamins and minerals in public health*. Available at: www.who.int/nutrition/publications/guidelines/rice-fortification/en/.

²⁷ WHO (2018) *Guideline: implementing effective actions for improving adolescent nutrition*. Available at: www.who.int/nutrition/publications/guidelines/effective-actions-improving-adolescent/en/.

²⁸ WHO (2017) *Protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding in facilities providing maternity and newborn services*. Available at: www.who.int/nutrition/publications/guidelines/breastfeeding-facilities-maternity-newborn/en/.

²⁹ WHO (2017) *Guidance on ending the inappropriate promotion of foods for infants and young children*. Available at: www.who.int/nutrition/publications/infantfeeding/manual-ending-inappropriate-promotion-food/en/.

³⁰ WHO (2018) *Protecting, promoting, and supporting breastfeeding in facilities providing maternity and newborn services: the revised Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative 2018: Implementation Guidance*. Available at: <http://www.who.int/nutrition/publications/infantfeeding/bfhi-implementation/en>.

³¹ WHO (2017) *Global nutrition monitoring framework: Operational guidance for tracking progress in meeting targets for 2025*. Available at: www.who.int/nutrition/publications/operational-guidance-GNMF-indicators/en/.

³² WHO (2019) *Replace Trans Fat: An action package to eliminate industrially-produced trans fat from the global food supply*. Available at: www.who.int/nutrition/topics/replace-transfat/.

³³ WHO (2019) *Commercial foods for infants and young children in the WHO European Region. A study of the availability, composition and marketing of baby foods in four European countries*. Available at: www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/disease-prevention/nutrition/publications/2019/commercial-foods-for-infants-and-young-children-in-the-who-european-region-2019.

³⁴ Global database on the Implementation of Nutrition Action (GINA). <https://extranet.who.int/nutrition/gina/>.

implementation of the Global Nutrition Monitoring Framework in 36 countries worldwide.

40. **The Committee on World Food Security (CFS)** is currently developing Voluntary Guidelines on Food Systems and Nutrition, to be presented at the CFS Plenary Session in October 2020. The policy process is informed by the scientific evidence provided by the CFS High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition's (HLPE) in its Report on Nutrition and Food Systems, published in October 2017.³⁵ The aim is for the Voluntary Guidelines to be a reference point for evidence-based guidance, mainly for governments, specialized institutions and other stakeholders, on effective policy, investment and institutional arrangements to address malnutrition in all its forms. They are expected to facilitate national efforts to operationalize the ICN2 Framework for Action under the umbrella of the Decade of Action. Their objective is to reshape and promote food systems to ensure the availability, affordability, safety, adequate quantity and quality of the food in sustainable healthy diets. The Voluntary Guidelines will take a systemic and evidence-based approach to addressing policy fragmentation, with a special emphasis on the food, agriculture and health sectors, as well as the challenges of social, environmental and economic sustainability.

41. In its role as a platform for global coordination and policy coherence on food security and nutrition, and as a space for dialogue and experience-sharing, the CFS hosted at its forty-sixth session in October 2019, a session to discuss progress in implementing ICN2 policies and actions at which FAO and WHO presented a progress report.

42. **The UN Network for SUN** contributed to all action areas of the Decade of Action in 2019 – both through the UN System and the SUN Movement community – particularly Action Area 6 on strengthened governance and accountability for nutrition, which is central to the Network's mandate. As a unique platform for integrated action on nutrition at country level, it has brought together more than 16 United Nations agencies to operationalize the principles of United Nations Reform and Agenda 2030. It has supported all 61 SUN countries (plus four Indian states) in fostering greater coherence of United Nations programming through development and humanitarian assistance frameworks, focusing on nutrition outcomes. It has facilitated the coordination of United Nations agencies, governments and other nutrition partners and supported United Nations involvement in national multi-stakeholder platforms (MSPs), fostering the engagement of United Nations Resident Coordinators in elevating engagement and commitment to nutrition at national level.

43. The UN Network has provided pivotal support to SUN government focal points, drawing on its portfolio of analytical tools to strengthen multisectoral nutrition governance, including coordination structures. In some cases, United Nations agencies serve as the conveners of other SUN networks, such as the Business Network in Bangladesh, Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Malawi. The UN Network has encouraged private-sector participation by organizing forums, contributing to private-sector engagement in country strategies, such as in Congo and the Cote d'Ivoire, and engaging in direct partnerships with private-sector entities to facilitate nutrition-sensitive investments.

44. The UN Network has been active beyond the SUN Movement in strengthening the functionality of country-level multi-stakeholder platforms in Bolivia (Plurinational State of), where it has brought together the United Nations agencies to

³⁵ HLPE (2017) *Nutrition and food systems. A report by the High-Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition of the Committee on World Food Security*. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i7846e.pdf>.

support the establishment of an MSP. Honduras, the newest SUN Member, is one of many countries the UN Network has encouraged and supported in joining the Movement. In Egypt, the UN Network tool was used to undertake a nutrition stakeholder and action mapping exercise, informing nutrition advocacy and mobilizing additional stakeholders.

45. In addition to the solid work undertaken by UN agencies in 2019, CGIAR member **HarvestPlus** met and advanced commitments it had made the previous year, while the **International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)** and **CARE** made new commitments to the Decade.

(a) HarvestPlus provided technical guidance and knowledge products to catalyse the scaling up of biofortification and 24 countries have now included biofortification in their national policies and programmes. In November 2019, agriculture ministers of the African Union (AU) recommended that their heads of state officially endorse this food-based nutrition strategy at the next AU summit in February 2020.³⁶ The Rome-based agencies further integrated biofortification into recommendations and programmes, including UNICEF's *The State of the World's Children 2019* report,³⁷ WFP's local and regional food procurement policy³⁸ and IFAD's nutrition-sensitive value-chain guidelines.³⁹

(b) ILRI has given its full support to the Decade of Action. It has committed to working with research partners to better discern the incentives for and barriers to consumption of animal-source foods and to increase the availability, access and affordability of animal-source foods for poor producers and consumers in low- and middle-income countries. ILRI's commitment includes identifying and promoting practices to assure the safety of animal-source foods, especially in informal markets, as well as practices to reduce the environmental footprint of livestock, including their greenhouse gas emissions.⁴⁰

(c) CARE has pledged to support the Decade of Action on Nutrition. As governments and stakeholders increasingly commit to the Decade and new action networks are formed, CARE will seek ways to collaborate and support common goals. It will also continue to advocate for just and sustainable food and water systems to provide healthy and nutritious diets, engaging governments, the private sector, international bodies and partners, including in non-traditional areas.⁴¹

46. The UNSCN Secretariat took a leading role in promoting links between the Decade of Action on Nutrition and the United Nations International Decade for Action on Water for Sustainable Development in a follow-up to the June 2018 Expert Group Meeting on Linking Nutrition with the SDGs, organized by UNSCN at United Nations Headquarters in New York. UNSCN co-organized the side-event, *The multiple*

³⁶ HarvestPlus (2019) *African Union Agriculture Ministers Pave Way for Summit Endorsement of Biofortification*. Available at: <https://www.harvestplus.org/knowledge-market/in-the-news/african-union-agriculture-ministers-pave-way-summit-endorsement>.

³⁷ UNICEF (2019) *The State of the World's Children 2019 – Children, Food and Nutrition: Growing well in a changing world*. Available at: <https://www.unicef.org/media/60806/file/SOWC-2019.pdf>.

³⁸ WFP (2019) *Local and regional food procurement policy*. Available at: <https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000108552/download/>.

³⁹ IFAD (2018) *Nutrition-sensitive value chains: A guide for project design*. Available at: <https://www.ifad.org/en/web/knowledge/publication/asset/40805038>.

⁴⁰ ILRI (2019) *The International Livestock Research Institute commits its support to the United Nations' 'Decade of Action on Nutrition', 2016–2025*. Available at: <https://www.unscn.org/uploads/web/news/ILRI-commitment-to-Un-Decade-for-Action-on-Nutrition-final-27sept19.pdf>.

⁴¹ CARE (2019) *CARE Commits to the UN Decade of Action on Nutrition*. Available at: <https://www.unscn.org/uploads/web/news/CARE-Decade-of-Action-Commitment-2019.pdf>.

*bridges connecting the water-nutrition divide: What's new?*⁴² at World Water Week, organized by the Stockholm International Water Institute in August 2019.⁴³ The UNSCN discussion paper on *Water and Nutrition: Harmonizing Actions for the United Nations Decades* also urged closer ties between water and nutrition, under the lead authorship of the CGIAR Research Programme on Water, Land and Ecosystems.⁴⁴

47. The UNSCN Secretariat continued to moderate the Decade for Action's main Twitter feed to raise awareness of its potential, highlighting the latest news in newsletters and on [webpages dedicated to the Nutrition Decade](#).⁴⁵

Actions undertaken to fulfil UNSCN's four Strategic Objectives (SOs)

48. Also in support of the Decade of Action on Nutrition, in 2019, UNSCN continued to work to meet its four Strategic Objectives, as set out in its Strategic Plan (2016–2020), guided by the findings of the 2017 discussion paper, *Global Governance for Nutrition and the role of UNSCN*.⁴⁶

- (a) SO1 – Maximize United Nations policy coherence and advocacy on nutrition
- (b) SO2 – Support consistent and accountable delivery by the United Nations System
- (c) SO3 – Explore new and emerging nutrition-related issues
- (d) SO4 – Promote knowledge-sharing across the United Nations System and beyond

Note: Several UNSCN work streams intersect and serve more than one Strategic Objective. To avoid repetition, they are reported only once.

IV. Strategic Objective 1 – Maximize UN policy coherence and advocacy on nutrition

49. Effective advocacy and policy coherence on nutrition requires UNSCN Members to jointly build and disseminate robust narratives on nutrition challenges and their solutions. To this end, UNSCN has continued to forge ties between its Members, furthering the debate towards common understanding and promoting consistent messages within the United Nations System and beyond.

50. UNSCN organized, co-organized and/or participated in nutrition-related global, regional and national events, plus events organized by its Members and associates. It participated in meetings of the United Nations governing bodies and other international forums, delivering coherent messages and furthering the debate on the links between nutrition and other development challenges, such as climate change, environmental protection, urbanization, the rural–urban nexus, health, agriculture, gender mainstreaming and development financing.

51. Good examples include the UNSCN-hosted Sustainable diets for healthy people and healthy planet (side-)event at the United Nations Environment Assembly in

⁴² <https://www.worldwaterweek.org/event/8484-the-multiple-bridges-connecting-the-water-nutrition-divide-whats-new>.

⁴³ <https://www.worldwaterweek.org/programme/overarching-conclusions>.

⁴⁴ <https://www.unscn.org/en/unscn-publications?idnews=2029>.

⁴⁵ <https://www.unscn.org/en/topics/un-decade-of-action-on-nutrition>.

⁴⁶ UNSCN (2017) *Global Governance for Nutrition and the role of UNSCN*. Available at: <https://www.unscn.org/uploads/web/news/document/GovernPaper-EN-may17-WEB.pdf>.

Nairobi in March; the First Global Conference on Synergies between the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement, hosted by UN DESA in Copenhagen in April 2019; and the collaborative United Nations side-event, Strengthening Synergies, Maximizing Co-benefits at the twenty-fifth session of the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change Conference of the Parties (UNFCCC COP 25) in Madrid in December. These events provided a platform for actors to share ideas, experiences and challenges in promoting sustainable healthy diets as a means of contributing to the alignment of climate and 2030 Agenda goals – specifically SDG 2 (Zero Hunger) and SDG 13 (combatting climate change) – and of galvanizing stakeholders at global, regional and country level into action to maximize synergies. These efforts, together with the aforementioned activities in Copenhagen and Nairobi, are highly likely to result in the inclusion of food systems transformation in formal negotiations at COP 26 in 2020.

52. UNSCN also attended the UN-Habitat First International Forum on Urban–Rural Linkages in Songyang, China, on “rural revitalization through innovation and valorisation”, commenting on the findings of its forthcoming discussion paper on Nutrition, Urban–Rural Linkages and Integrated Territorial Development, prepared together with the CGIAR Research Program on Agriculture for Nutrition and Health and UN-Habitat.

53. As a member of the Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases (UNIATF), UNSCN participated in the body’s twelfth and thirteenth meetings in New York (March) and Rome (October). As convener of the thematic Working Group on nutrition of UNIATF, UNSCN has worked with other group members to tackle all forms of malnutrition. In 2019, UNIATF members participated in joint programming missions and refined guidance on nutrition for future missions. Also, during the seventy-fourth session of the United Nations General Assembly, the Friends of the United Nations Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases co-organized a side-event on “supporting Member States to achieve the NCD-related Sustainable Development Goals targets”. Co-organizers included the United Nations Development Programme and the governments of India, Japan, the Russian Federation, Sri Lanka and Viet Nam.

54. UNSCN continued to serve on the Advisory Group of the CFS and as a member of the CFS Technical Task Team on Nutrition. During the forty-sixth session of the CFS, in October 2019, UNSCN partnered with others to organize and promote a number of side-events that helped to draw attention to nutrition and presented a coherent narrative to various audiences on tackling all forms of malnutrition.

(a) “Maximizing the impact of the Nutrition for Growth Summit in Japan in 2020: What more can be done to transform our failing food system?” UNSCN organized this side-event in partnership with the UK Department for International Development (DFID), FAO, the Global Panel on Agriculture and Food Systems for Nutrition (GLOPAN) and the governments of the Netherlands and Japan.

(b) “Treasures of the oceans and inland waters – ensuring food security and nourishing nations: Gaining and sharing knowledge in the Decade of Action on Nutrition. From healthy waters to healthy people.” This side-event was organized by UNSCN and the Global Action Network – Sustainable Food from the Oceans and Inland Waters for Food Security and Nutrition, the governments of Norway, Finland and Ireland, the Institutes of Marine Research of Ireland and Norway, WorldFish (CGIAR), the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), FAO, the World Bank’s Youth2Youth Community, the Joint Programming Initiative Healthy and Productive Seas and Oceans (JPI Oceans), the Nordic Food Policy Lab and the International Collective in Support of Fish Workers.

(c) “Investing in schools for sustainable nutrition impact: Using schools to transform food systems and promote double duty actions for improved nutrition.” This was organized by UNSCN in partnership with the UN Network Secretariat, the WFP Centre of Excellence Against Hunger, FAO and the Brazilian Cooperation Agency (ABC).

55. UNSCN also attended and presented at meetings to help ensure policy coherence across the United Nations System and the consistent delivery of nutrition actions and nutrition-sensitive approaches on the ground:

(a) the World Bank-led South Asia Food and Nutrition Security Initiative (SAFANSI) meeting in Bangkok, Thailand, in July 2019. SAFANSI was established by the World Bank in 2010 to address the high rates of malnutrition in the region. It works as an innovative platform, piloting cross-cutting interventions and leveraging funds when pilots are successful, and serving as a learning and exchange platform. UNSCN participated in discussions, underlining the urgent need to advocate for food systems transformation to deliver sustainable healthy diets and avail of the window of opportunity provided by the Decade for Action on Nutrition.

(b) the fourth Eurasian Food Security Conference. This is a major event promoting food and nutrition security in the Eurasian region. It provides an international collaborative platform by bringing together experts from regional and international organizations, scientific and educational institutions and various governments to address regional food security concerns. UNSCN delivered a presentation on “global commitments and tools to eradicate hunger and all forms of malnutrition”.

56. Lastly, in accordance with ECOSOC decision 2018/207, UNSCN submitted its annual report to the 2019 session of ECOSOC, followed by a formal presentation to the ECOSOC Coordination and Management Meeting (April 2019, New York).

57. United Nations policy coherence at global level is fundamental to supporting country action and service delivery for those most in need. In 2019, by availing of all of these opportunities for participation and creating new ones, UNSCN was able to bring a unified, harmonized and coherent United Nations voice on nutrition to diverse audiences and support global and national actors in advancing their efforts to improve nutrition.

V. Strategic Objective 2 – Support consistent and accountable delivery by the UN system

58. In 2019, UNSCN continued to advise countries and other stakeholders on how to define, submit and report on SMART commitments⁴⁷ to the Decade, to achieve agreed nutrition targets in support of the SDGs.

59. Progress was also made on the issue of nutrition in emergencies. UNSCN supported the development of a Global Action Plan on Wasting,⁴⁸ fostering discussion among Members with a view to forging a common narrative. UNSCN is also a member of the Global Nutrition Cluster⁴⁹ established as part of the humanitarian reform process. It participates in two of its workstreams: the Acute Malnutrition

⁴⁷ SMART = Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time-bound.

⁴⁸ WHO (2020) *Global Action Plan on Child Wasting. Accelerating progress in preventing and managing child wasting and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals*. Available at: https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/nutritionlibrary/articles---call-for/draft-global-action-plan-childwasting.pdf?sfvrsn=54335d78_2.

⁴⁹ <http://nutritioncluster.net/>.

Global Thematic Working Group and the Reference Group on the Use of Cash and Vouchers Assistance for nutrition in humanitarian contexts.

60. UNSCN remained a member of the Multi-stakeholder Advisory Committee of the Sustainable Food Systems Programme (SFSP) of the One Planet Network,⁵⁰ making the link between sustainable production and sustainable healthy consumption. It also serves on the Organizing Committee of the Third Global Conference of the SFSP.

61. Lastly, it was in the context of SO2 that UNSCN continued its work in relation to the promotion and dissemination of its Guidance Note on Integration of Nutrition in the UNDAF, renamed as the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.⁵¹

VI. Strategic Objective 3 – Explore new and emerging nutrition related issues

62. In 2019, UNSCN continued to explore new and emerging nutrition-related issues in close collaboration with its Members. This is an essential line of work to help build the much-needed coherent and robust narrative on nutrition challenges and solutions. After a consultative process with nutrition stakeholders and UNSCN Members, the following topics were deemed worth exploring and will be the subject of further work by UNSCN in the coming years:

- “Nutrition in a digital world” will be the subject of *UNSCN Nutrition 45*, UNSCN’s flagship annual publication. A call for contributions has been issued and widely disseminated. The peer-reviewed report is scheduled for publication in June 2020;
- Nutrition action within new development paradigms;
- Financial investment in nutrition – what are the modalities?

63. The links forged by UNSCN between various development actors in 2019 led to the identification of two important topics for further work in the form of discussion papers in 2020: the role of fish and the role of livestock in sustainable healthy diets.

64. UNSCN also continued its cross-cutting work in support of various Strategic Objectives in 2019, for example, on sustainable food systems for improved nutrition, on schools as a setting for improving nutrition and on private-sector engagement for better nutrition.

Private-sector engagement for better nutrition results

65. Tackling all forms of malnutrition while protecting the planet is first and foremost the responsibility of national governments, which must provide leadership, set priorities, pool capacity and resources from multiple actors, provide public services and enforce national laws. Living up to this responsibility requires decisive engagement with all key stakeholders, including the private sector.

66. While the private sector is the backbone of food systems and has been producing and distributing the foods and other essential goods people need, some private-sector actors are still engaged in practices that may cause harm to nutrition and the environment.

67. To best assist governments in carrying out their tasks, it is important that UNSCN Members identify ways to support the private sector in shaping more

⁵⁰ <https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/sustainable-food-systems/about>.

⁵¹ See also paragraph 18.

sustainable food systems that deliver sustainable healthy diets. UNSCN Members should promote constructive dialogue and build engaging policy environments that allow governments to work closely with the private sector to improve nutrition, manage conflicts of interest and enhance transparency and accountability.

68. To this end, in late 2018, UNSCN shared a questionnaire with Member agencies to identify their reasons and methods of engagement with the private sector, as well as the safeguards they use to avoid and manage potential conflicts of interest. This work continued in 2019, with interviews aimed at digging deeper into agencies' experience and this should lead to an inventory of policies, guidelines, norms and procedures for due diligence, as well as examples of best practice. The inventory will be made available to national governments, private-sector actors and other interested parties.

VII. Strategic Objective 4 – Promote knowledge sharing across the UN system and beyond

69. UNSCN's knowledge products present the collective effort and views of its Members and partners and support the United Nations goal of "delivering as one" on nutrition. The products are developed with input from experts in different spheres of knowledge, both within and outside UNSCN's member agencies. This creates strong interdisciplinary connections and opens the door to intersectoral collaboration.

70. In 2019, UNSCN continued to develop its products as a means of forging such ties and synergies to enhance impact. With so many nutrition-related agendas being pursued by myriad state and non-state actors at the international, national and sub-national levels, UNSCN maintained its support for time-bound online communities of practice (CoP) to advance analysis and discussion, drawing on their expertise and experience. In 2019, UNSCN continued to facilitate the following: (i) the Accelerated Reduction Effort on Anaemia CoP; (ii) the Agriculture-Nutrition (Ag4Nut) CoP; (iii) the Nutrition and Climate Change e-group discussion forum; and (iv) the Nutrition and Noncommunicable Chronic Diseases discussion forum.⁵²

71. UNSCN also interacted with core constituencies outside the United Nations System – with the research community, for example – to advance nutritional knowledge. UNSCN's e-newsletters and e-alerts were distributed to more than 5 000 subscribers in 2019. The e-newsletters are now produced jointly with the UN Network.

72. For its 44th edition, *UNSCN News* was renamed *UNSCN Nutrition*. The theme of the 2019 edition was ***Food environments: Where people meet the food system***⁵³ and it highlighted recent developments in policy and programme design and implementation. It documented numerous experiences across the food system, enhancing knowledge and promoting the debate on the need for transformative approaches to the food system to generate healthier food environments. UNSCN also published other knowledge products, including the aforementioned discussion papers on *Water and Nutrition* and *Urban–Rural Linkages for Nutrition*. To ensure the greatest possible uptake, discussion papers will be translated into all six official United Nations languages.

⁵² <https://www.unscn.org/en/forums/discussion-groups>.

⁵³ UNSCN (2019) *UNSCN Nutrition 44 – Food environments: Where people meet the food system*. Available at: <https://www.unscn.org/uploads/web/news/UNSCN-Nutrition44-WEB-21aug.pdf>.

VIII. Conclusions

73. In 2019, UNSCN continued its work to maximize UN System-wide policy coherence and to formulate global guidelines for nutrition policies and programming in line with global frameworks and its Strategic Objectives. Collaboration between Members helped to identify synergies and ways of optimizing available resources. By engaging with various processes and platforms, UNSCN was able to underscore the importance of coherently addressing nutrition and nutritional challenges throughout the United Nations System – something that is key to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

74. The mid-way point of the Decade of Action on Nutrition will be reached in 2020. Dialogues with stakeholders took place in 2019, and will continue in 2020, to assess progress and appraise specific advances, initiatives and partnerships in nutrition over the first five years and to identify focus areas for priority action in its second half. With only five years in which to achieve the World Health Assembly targets to improve maternal, infant and young child nutrition⁵⁴ and with a pressing need to transform the food system to enhance access to sustainable healthy diets, the mid-term review of the Decade will engage all stakeholders in pinpointing the additional efforts required. It will promote new ways of working together and the establishment of new action networks. It will forge further agreements and SMART commitments by governments and other stakeholders to address all forms of malnutrition, leaving no one behind. UNSCN, with its evolving and buttressed coordination mechanism, its convening capacity and knowledge products, will be instrumental in this process. UNSCN documents will inform the Decade mid-term review and remain widely used in 2020 and beyond.

75. For people and planet, 2020 will be a crucial milestone: the start of a 10-year countdown to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. There needs to be a concerted drive to accelerate efforts if all of the goals are to be achieved. Furthering UN System-wide coordination efforts and strengthening policy coherence are more important than ever. UNSCN and the UN Network will work even more closely in 2020 and steadily transition into a more effective nutrition coordination mechanism with global and country reach.

76. With a stronger coordination mechanism from 2020, there will be far greater alignment of nutrition policy and consistency of delivery across the United Nations System in response to country needs. The global nutrition community will be even better prepared to seize the opportunities generated by the Decade of Action and other development processes to combat malnutrition in all its forms. This includes the Tokyo Nutrition for Growth Summit 2020 to be hosted by the Government of Japan in tandem with the 2020 Olympic Games,⁵⁵ as well as the 2021 Food Systems Summit called by the United Nations Secretary-General.

77. Working closely with all of its development and humanitarian partners, UNSCN and UN Network's joint and mutually reinforced coordination arrangements will bring their working capacity to the next level, catalysing the UN System into doing so much more to promote sustainable healthy diets and improve nutrition, making a substantial and decisive contribution to enabling the United Nations System and its partners to meet the major global challenges and ambitious objectives of the SDGs.

⁵⁴ WHO (n.d.) *Global Targets 2025: To improve maternal, infant and young child nutrition* [online]. <https://www.who.int/nutrition/global-target-2025/en/>.

⁵⁵ <https://nutritionforgrowth.org/events/>.