Agenda Item 12.6: Maternal, infant and young child nutrition

Statement:

Global Health Council, supported by the American Academy of Pediatrics, NCD Child, and ACTION Global Health Advocacy Partnership, commend WHO for progress made to secure country commitments to end all forms of malnutrition by 2030, along with efforts to align WHO’s nutrition targets with the Sustainable Development Goals. We support the WHO’s surveillance to document progress with global targets, and we are encouraged by reduced levels of stunting among children.

Good nutritional outcomes begin with the mother. Anemia, and the mother’s nutritional status are intrinsically linked to her ability to exclusively breastfeed. Breastfeeding improves health, development and survival of infants and mothers. Increasing breastfeeding rates are critically important to reducing preventable child deaths, preventing development of metabolic syndrome and diabetes, childhood obesity, ensuring long-term health, wellbeing, and productivity; and reducing maternal deaths linked to breast cancer. We remain seriously concerned about infants and young children who are inappropriately fed and whose nutritional status, growth and development are compromised. Often, it is political and cultural barriers that create this lack of equity.

We encourage Member States to be aware of the new guidance and resources produced by the WHO Secretariat, for a comprehensive implementation plan on maternal, infant and young child nutrition. We support the WHO’s efforts to integrate and scale up interventions with other UN agencies, and to seek partnership and alignment with multiple sectors beyond health to protect, promote and support breastfeeding.

Finally we wish to firmly recognize that breastfeeding and addressing all nutritional needs of a population are key drivers in achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, and any progress towards health for all.