

Statement to the 148th Executive Board
Provisional agenda item 16

Social determinants of health: Report by the Director-General

World Obesity Federation, supported by WCRF International, welcomes the report on social determinants of health (SDH). We commend the work done to develop tools and frameworks to support countries in advancing a multisectoral approach to health. We welcome WHO's manifesto for a healthy recovery from COVID-19, highlighting the importance of addressing the SDH in responses.

World Obesity also recognises how many of the determinants of health lie outside the traditional jurisdiction of the health sector, and can only be improved through a multisectoral approach: [nowhere is this more true than for obesity](#).

SDH influence all the major risk factors responsible for the rise in NCDs. Among them, unhealthy diets are responsible for more deaths than any other risk factor globally.¹ With the increased recognition that obesity often leads to worse outcomes in cases of illness due to COVID-19, the pandemic has exposed vulnerability in our food systems, surrounding environments and the absence of processes to protect the health of vulnerable populations. However, we caution a focus solely on food insecurity and would like to see more action around the commercial determinants of health. In some cases commercial actors have also taken advantage of the most vulnerable by encouraging increased consumption of unhealthy products. Access to healthy, safe, sustainable and nutritious food is a key determinant of health and should be a right, not a privilege.

We call on Member States to:

- Adopt systems-based approaches between health and other sectors to address the upstream factors influencing obesity and related NCDs, including lack of access to healthy food, poorly designed built environments, access to health services and education.
- Address the commercial determinants of health by implementing policies to improve food environments.
- Use an equity lens and consult with civil society and people with lived experience when designing and implementing interventions.

¹ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(20\)30752-2/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(20)30752-2/fulltext)