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## **Benefits of good nutrition take centre stage at UN high-level event**



20 September 2011 –

Representatives of governments, civil society and the private sector joined United Nations agencies today to emphasize the importance of good nutrition, which is vital not only for human health but also for national economic and social development.

The high-level event on nutrition, hosted by [Secretary-General](#) Ban Ki-moon, was held within the framework of a two-day UN summit on non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cancer and diabetes, which yesterday adopted a wide-ranging action plan to curb factors, like tobacco and alcohol use, behind the often preventable scourge that causes 63 per cent of all deaths.

Efforts to promote healthy diets, replacing foods that are high in saturated fats, trans-fatty acids, sugars, or salt with more nutritional options, figure high on the action plan, which includes possible price and tax measures to reduce tobacco use and steps to curb alcohol consumption in the battle against the four groups of NCDs – cardiovascular diseases, cancers, chronic respiratory diseases and diabetes.

Today's meeting, among several at UN Headquarters this week on the margins of the 66th session of the General Assembly, took place one year after the launch of the [Scale Up Nutrition](#) (SUN) Movement, a global initiative that aims to improve maternal and child nutrition. It focuses on the critical 1,000-day window between pregnancy and a child's second birthday, when proper nutrition can mean the difference between health and sickness, life and death.

“The lives of millions of children are at stake. We can help them realize their physical and intellectual potential,” Mr. Ban [told](#) the meeting, which is part of a two-day event featuring the participation of heads of State and other high-level government officials.

The magnitude of the problem is most obvious today in the Horn of Africa, he said, where over 13 million people desperately need food to survive.

“Without proper nutrition the children and pregnant mothers will suffer irreversible damage,” Mr. Ban warned.

The SUN Movement, he added, is about supporting countries – improving nutritious diets, enhancing nutrition in pregnancy and promoting breastfeeding. “It is also encouraging nutrition-sensitive strategies in many areas, including agriculture, social protection, education, employment and health.”

The SUN countries include Bangladesh, Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guatemala, Laos, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Nepal, Niger, Peru, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

“It is particularly gratifying to see this emphasis in countries that have been experiencing protracted crises with support for resilient food systems and special attention to the needs of pregnant women and children,” said David Nabarro, the Secretary-General's Special Representative for Food Security and Nutrition.

More than 100 institutions – comprising donors, the UN, civil society, the private sector and research bodies – are also part of the SUN movement, and it is expected that more countries will commit to scaling up nutrition in the coming months.

“The SUN Movement is a collective global commitment which will result in lasting change,” said Dr. Nabarro. “It is led by developing countries. Civil society organizations are backing it. Development partners are engaged. The UN system and World Bank are fully involved...”

“There has been extraordinary progress this year: I anticipate even more in the years to come.”

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