

International Symposium on Understanding Moderate Malnutrition in Children for Effective Interventions

Closing statement by Mr Kwaku Aning, DDG-TC and Head of Technical Cooperation

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Good evening, distinguished delegates, dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak to you as the Symposium on Understanding Moderate Malnutrition in Children draws to a close. We have welcomed around 350 participants from some 65 countries and 50 agencies, including the United Nations, non UN bodies, NGOs, donors, academics and the public sector. Discussions have been wide ranging, stimulating and innovative, recognizing the need for commitment and action at all levels.

As the week ends, it is timely to remember that over 162 million children are malnourished. Asia carries the heaviest burden, followed by sub-Saharan Africa. There is a whole range of basic underlying causes for this, spanning infection, hygiene and poverty. While considerable progress has been made in addressing malnutrition in recent years, much remains to be done – on maternal malnutrition, for example, particularly in young or adolescent mothers.

Action is required on multiple fronts. It's essential that more evidence – high quality evidence – is collected to capture the size of the problem if it is to be addressed effectively. We face a global lack of capacity at all levels – within the community, in research and advocacy, in food technology – the list is long. Although many actions are being taken, coherence between these actions is limited.

This Symposium has brought together an impressive array of knowledge and hands-on expertise, and your discussions will help set the course of global action. It's clear from what has been said during the course of the week that there is no silver bullet for moderate childhood malnutrition. Addressing the problem will require leadership and commitment, as well as the involvement of many different sectors.

Ladies, and gentlemen,

There are several recommendations from the Symposium that I would like to highlight:

First of all, strong government commitment and country ownership of initiatives to address moderate malnutrition are essential, particularly in efforts to improve the nutritional status of adolescent girls for a good start to motherhood. More evidence-based, cost-effective interventions are needed, and this will require the establishment of links with multiple sectors. The quality of data must be improved to inform policy. The use of stable isotope techniques as well as anthropometrics to evaluate the effectiveness of nutritional intervention programmes must be optimised. It is also important to take into account the range of agencies

working in the area of malnutrition, and to avoid multiple, parallel actions to treat malnutrition

Capacity building is going to be key to addressing moderate malnutrition in childhood. Here, national governments must take ownership. Partnerships with academia will be important for programme formulation and evaluation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This Symposium has started an important conversation, and we must make sure to continue it. From my side, I assure you that the IAEA's technical cooperation programme will work to ensure coordinated, cohesive support to efforts to address this challenge, in collaboration with other United Nations and international partners.

Thank you.