

FEDERATION OF AFRICAN NUTRITION SOCIETIES (FANUS)
Quarzazate Declaration on Nutrition in Africa
9 May 2007

Opening Statement

We, the participants of the first FANUS Congress in Quarzazate, Morocco, are concerned about the nutrition related problems in Africa, which indicate that this Continent will not achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015 if nothing is done about the current situation. We are particularly concerned about the slow progress in the reduction of poverty, hunger and malnutrition (PHM) in all its forms in Africa, a necessary prerequisite for gains in education, health, social equality, environmental sustainability and international solidarity.

Nutritional Problems in Africa

We recognise that the problems of nutrition in Africa include poor nutritional status, food and nutrition insecurity, micronutrient deficiencies (hidden hunger), the coexistence of under and over-nutrition, the negative trends of the 'nutrition transition' related to globalization, as well as the vicious intergenerational cycle of poverty, hunger and malnutrition. These are further exacerbated by the high prevalence of diseases, such as malaria, tuberculosis and HIV/AIDS in many African countries. The resulting high prevalence of maternal mortality, infant and child morbidity and mortality, is unacceptable in our Continent.

Causative and Contributing Factors

Most African governments and leaders have pledged their commitment to achieve the MDGs in time by signing several agreements on necessary actions. We declare that failure to implement these commitments and actions is one of the major reasons for the unacceptable sustained nutritional problems in Africa. Another contributing factor is the recruitment of African professionals working in community development by countries from the North, international agencies, non-governmental organisations and industries. This 'brain drain' of professionals trained in Africa, leaves a gap in human resources necessary for community development and addressing the nutrition-related problems in Africa.

Impact of Political Instability on Nutrition

We also, recognise with deep concern the impact of civil strife on internal displacement deepening poverty, hunger and malnutrition. We, therefore, urge the African government and the international community to work towards comprehensive peace in areas of crisis. This will be a prerequisite for improving the nutritional status of the population.

The Role of Nutritionists and Nutrition Practitioners (NPs)

As nutritionists and nutrition practitioners, we are committed to address this unacceptable situation of the gap between the international goals for human development and the reality in Africa by (for example) the following means:

1. Providing the scientific evidence-based for all policies, strategies and programmes aimed at alleviating poverty, hunger, and malnutrition.
2. Convincing African governments through advocacy and lobbying to be accountable and to fulfil their ethical obligations and responsibilities to address these problems by developing infrastructure and providing the economic, human and material resources required.
3. Mobilizing all stakeholders to take the necessary actions, based on a scientific analysis of local needs and cultures, to address poverty, hunger and malnutrition in all its forms and consequences. This necessitates the formation of partnerships and a common agenda, and would include nutrition education, promotion of optimal diets, supplementation, fortification, biofortification, food-based approaches and a focus on 'vulnerable groups' in a way that will honour human rights, human dignity and equity
4. Contributing to individuals, institutions and organizations capacity building in Africa; to set and achieve the goals necessary to alleviate poverty, hunger and malnutrition in all it forms and consequences.
5. Mobilizing all countries, organizations and institutions for the retention of African-trained professionals working in community development or at least remuneration and compensation to replace those recruited to work outside Africa.

Concluding Remarks

We acknowledge and declare that the reduction of poverty, hunger and malnutrition in Africa is the key for reaching all the other MDGs. As African nutritionists and nutrition practitioners we know that a future without poverty, hunger and malnutrition in Africa would need a concerted efforts of all and sundry. We accept this responsibility and are committed to taking ownership for capacity building. We will provide the leadership to ensure that scientific, evidence based principles, policies and practices are implemented for the alleviation and prevention of poverty, hunger and malnutrition. As African nutritionists and nutrition practitioners, we will work together to strengthen collaborations between countries to achieve these goals.

9 May, 2007 Quarzazate/Morocco