

Informative meeting on the annual “Foreign Policy and Global Health” United Nations General Assembly Resolution.

WHO – Room M.605

November 2, 2018 – 12.30

Statement by the Permanent Representative of Italy to the International Organizations in Geneva, Ambassador Gian Lorenzo Cornado

Thank you very much, Ambassador Azevêdo, for convening this meeting and for the information provided on the annual “Foreign Policy and Global Health” United Nations General Assembly Resolution.

I understand that this is not a consultative forum, neither a negotiating committee, as negotiations will take place in New York. Nevertheless, in light of the importance that Italy attaches to the topic of nutrition, which is the overarching theme of this resolution, I would like to take this opportunity to make some remarks on the text that was circulated. As you know, I sent yesterday a letter to all Permanent Representatives in Geneva to highlight profound concern over the language that has been used in the resolution.

Just one month ago, on September 27th, the Third High Level Meeting on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases took place at the margins of the UN General Assembly, and representatives of member States’ governments agreed on the text of an outcome document, the political declaration, that was long negotiated by our colleagues in New York. The text of the declaration – later incorporated in the UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/73/2, adopted last October 10th under Agenda item 119 – is a positive and balanced outcome, that allowed to reach consensus thanks to the constructive approach of all delegations involved in the negotiations, with Italy being one of the most active.

Unfortunately, we have been witnessing several attempts to go beyond the consensus reached by delegations with the political declaration, “reinterpreting” the will of Member States, selectively overstressing commitments and mentioning measures that were rejected during the negotiations. The press release issued by WHO soon after the High Level Meeting, for example, hints at world leaders having agreed on “robust laws and fiscal measures to protect people from (...) unhealthy foods and other harmful products”, while such provisions do not appear in the outcome document and the term “unhealthy foods” and “unhealthy products” see no place in the text of the political declaration, which only speaks about “unhealthy diets” and “unhealthy lifestyles”.

The same approach seems to have influenced the drafting of the OP 7 of the draft resolution that was presented today and that refers to, among other things, urging member states to “adopt fiscal and regulatory public policies, such as taxation of unhealthy foods and beverages, effective front-of-pack labelling etc.”.

There is in fact no mention in the September 27th political declaration of “unhealthy foods and beverages”, “effective front-of-pack labeling”, “restrictions to the marketing and commercialization of unhealthy foods”. Furthermore we deeply regret that the “Foreign Policy and Global Health Initiative” member States refer in their draft resolution to a generic expression such as “unhealthy

food and beverages” particularly in view of the lack of scientific base and best knowledge for using such a designation.

It has always been agreed by the scientific community and in United Nations Resolutions that, in terms of nutrition, there are no healthy or unhealthy foods but rather healthy and unhealthy diets.

Classification of food products was, in fact, never discussed among member States neither in New York, nor in Geneva, nor have appropriate criteria to attribute similar qualifications ever been agreed.

The draft resolution proposed by the “Foreign Policy and Global Health” Initiative is very divisive, disrespectful of the decisions made by the Heads of State and Government only one month ago and is therefore unacceptable for the Italian Government.

With regards to interventions in nutrition domain, we strongly believe that the appropriate and most effective way to prevent and control non-communicable diseases require multi-sectoral strategies. These include the promotion of a balanced, healthy and sustainable diet, without excluding a priori any food and, at the same time, limiting the total intake of energy while encouraging the intake of fruits and vegetables and promoting physical activity.

We are ready, Madame Ambassador, for further consultations but at the same time we take this opportunity to call for a more open, coherent and transparent engagement of WHO with member states and to avoid misleading campaigns which often, very often, are not supported by a solid scientific base.

Thank you very much.