



## World Health Professions Alliance WHPA

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### Executive Board 136<sup>th</sup> Session

#### Agenda Item : Update on the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity

Honourable Chairman, Honourable Members of the World Health Assembly,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of the International Council of Nurses, the World Medical Association, the International Pharmaceutical Federation, the World Confederation for Physical Therapy and the World Dental Federation, which together form the World Health Professions Alliance.

The rapid increase in the number of overweight or obese infants and young children is a global cause of concern. As identified in the report by the Director-General, there is ample scientific evidence that a healthy diet and sufficient physical activity are key elements for the prevention of non-communicable diseases and their risk factors, including overweight and obesity.

Children with illness, injuries and disabilities are especially prone to obesity not necessarily associated with the health condition, but because generally available programmes and facilities for physical activity are not accessible. Physical therapists, amongst health professionals, are exercise experts and able to work with parents and children to design programmes of exercise and adapted physical activity to improve fitness in all, regardless of the health condition that prompts an encounter with health services. Strategies in settings such as schools, places of work and homes are an essential part of the lifelong approach to enhancing physical activity levels. Research in an older population shows that type of exercise, travel time and costs are valued over and above health benefits when selecting physical activities [1] illustrating that matching activities to the individual's priorities is important for sustaining enhanced physical activity.

Children frequently exposed to a sugar-rich diet are especially prone to overweight. Specific efforts are therefore needed to reduce daily sugar consumption, which, as pointed out by WHO Director-General at the 67<sup>th</sup> World Health Assembly, has a documented association both with obesity and with caries, a disease which affects 60-90% of children worldwide.

Thank you for your attention.

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