



Statement of Ireland

79th World Health Assembly

Item 15.4

Maternal, infant, and young child nutrition

22 May 2026

Chair,

Ireland reaffirms its strong alignment with the SDG commitment to end all forms of malnutrition, to improve maternal, infant and young child nutrition, and ensure that every child has the best possible start in life.

Millions of women and children are still affected by varying forms of malnutrition, while the current context of escalating crises and reduced levels of ODA threatens to reverse decades of progress on health and food security, and to undermine the basis for economic growth and stability.

Five million children under the age of five die each year. There are no words to capture the scale of this tragedy. And, it is unacceptable that something as basic as access to the right food is a contributing, if not the primary, cause of death for these children.

Some 20 million under-weight children born each year and face life-long challenges as a result. One third of pregnant women are anaemic, and are unable to access the nutrients needed to ensure their infants can survive and fully thrive. Early intervention is crucial. We know that the first one thousand days are critical and that investing in maternal, infant and young child health is

profoundly important and yields real results – for health and well-being, and for equitable economic growth and development.

We welcome and commend the WHO's leadership and measures to advance nutrition, including science- and evidence-based guidance on healthy diets; strengthened nutrition data, surveillance and monitoring; and, the generation and scaling of evidence-based care and treatment.

Ireland remains deeply committed to working on nutrition domestically and through our international cooperation. In line with last year's resolution to extend the Comprehensive Implementation Plan on Maternal, Infant, and Young Child Nutrition to 2030, we have pledged to spend €250 million annually with partners, including the WHO, to accelerate action necessary to end malnutrition and improve health outcomes globally.

We call for the full implementation of the resolution, emphasising in particular the priority actions and operational targets.

We reaffirm our strong support for the WHO and call on WHO Member States and partners to urgently scale-up evidence-based policy and interventions. Maternal nutrition must remain a priority - investing in the health and nutrition of women and girls is essential to breaking intergenerational cycles of malnutrition.

We need to promote breastfeeding, including through full implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes, and, improve complementary feeding, ensuring that all children have access to safe, diverse and nutritious diets.

We know that nutrition is fundamental to health and well-being, and we also know the solution lies beyond the health sector: Fully comprehensive, whole of

government and whole of society approaches are required so that every child can reach their full potential.

I conclude by noting Ireland's continued appreciation of the WHO leadership and for its effective work to define, advocate, and deliver policy and practice to move nutrition forward globally, and in particular for countries and communities in crisis.

Thank you.