

# Counselling and dieting among new UN health agency guidelines on child obesity

An estimated 41 million children under five years old are obese or overweight, United Nations health experts warned today, launching new guidelines to tackle what they call a global epidemic.

Faced with evidence indicating that the problem affects rich and poor countries alike, the World Health Organization (WHO) has released details on how trained professionals can better identify youngsters in need of help.

The just-published [obesity guidelines](#) include counselling and dieting, an assessment of eating habits along with the more usual weight and height measurements.

Failing to heed these recommendations may leave vulnerable children at an increased risk of dying young from a range of life-threatening diseases, WHO warns.

In 2016, Asia accounted for half of all overweight or obese children, and one quarter lived in Africa, according to the UN agency's Dr. Francesco Branca, Director of the Department of Nutrition for Health and Development.

He explained that this is related to the fact that children in poorer countries often get too little breastmilk, nor the right complimentary food.

Paradoxically, this leaves under-nourished children at greater risk of putting on excess weight as they grow, when they're offered so-called "cheap calories," in the form of fatty, sugary foods.

"Malnutrition is responsible for a lack of resilience to changes in the food environment. So a malnourished child would be more susceptible to gaining more weight when exposed to a food environment which is high in fat, sugar, for instance."

The problem of excess weight is rising in all world regions, but most rapidly in poorer and middle-income countries.

Dr. Branca insisted that it was up to governments to do more to address the problem, faced with what he called an "unsuitable food system" that fails to provide sufficient nutritious foods "with the right levels of vitamins and minerals."

Educating people about the risks of eating unhealthily is a welcome first step, he said, but what's really needed is more regulation to ensure that healthier foods are cheaper and more readily available.

---

## [UN chief to visit storm-ravaged islands of Antigua, Barbuda and Dominica this weekend](#)

4 October 2017 – United Nations [Secretary-General](#) António Guterres announced today that he will be visiting hurricane hit islands of Antigua, Barbuda and Dominica this Saturday to survey the damage caused by multiple storms and what more the UN can do help people recover.

Speaking to journalists at a press stakeout at UN Headquarters, in New York, Mr. Guterres also highlighted the growing impact of climate change and said that over the past 30 years, the number of annual weather-related disasters nearly tripled, causing great economic losses.

“Scientists are learning more and more about the links between climate change and extreme weather,” said the Secretary General.

“Climate change is warming the seas. This, in turn, means more water vapor in the atmosphere [and] when storms come, they bring more rain,” he added.

*More to follow...*

---

## [Sustainable development of cities key to implement SDGs, says head of UN regional development arm](#)

4 October 2017 – Noting the high speed of urbanization in Latin America and the Caribbean, the United Nations development arm in the region underlined the need to keep a close watch on the provision of services, equipment, mobility, housing and urban land to make sure they can match pace with the demand.

Speaking at the opening of the [Cities Conference](#), Alicia Bárcena, the Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean ([ECLAC](#)) underscored that despite significant progress in reducing poverty, high degrees of socioeconomic residential segregation continues to persist in metropolises and large and small cities and towns.

Socioeconomic segregation deepens inequity and contributes to social fragmentation and the high levels of violence that characterize many cities in [the region], she [said](#).

According to estimates, by 2030 the timeframe to realize the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) there could be more than 92 million additional people living in cities in Latin America and the Caribbean. The region is already the most urbanized developing region in the world.

Therefore, added Ms. Bárcena, it is necessary to guarantee the right to the city as a basic requirement for achieving sustainable development.

Concluding this Friday, the Cities Conference focuses on the regional implementation of the New Urban Agenda the outcome of the [Habitat III](#) conference to build inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable cities.

Also at the inaugural session of the Conference, the head of ECLAC presented the Regional Action Plan for implementing the Habitat III outcome, proposing actions the countries of the region can take to ensure sustainable development of their cities and human settlements.

The Regional Action Plan is centred on six action areas, which include national urban policies; urban legal frameworks; urban and territorial planning and design; financing urbanization; local implementation; and monitoring, reporting and revision mechanisms.

The Cities Conference has been organized by ECLAC, the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) and the General Assembly of Ministers and High-level Authorities of the Housing and Urban Development Sector in Latin America and the Caribbean (known by its Spanish acronym, MINURVI) in Santiago, Chile.

---

## [Relief operation in storm-battered Dominica 'going in the right direction,' says UN official](#)

3 October 2017 – Two weeks after Hurricane Maria devastated Dominica, the island nation's recovery is becoming more evident as the main port has reopened and supplies of food, water and basic necessities are being regularly delivered to the people, a United Nations Resident Coordinator in the region said today, while stressing that are still "major challenges" ahead.

Briefing reporters at UN Headquarters in New York via telephone from Dominica, Stephen O'Malley, who is the UN Resident Coordinator for Barbados

and for the Organization of Eastern Caribbean States, said “the [relief] operation is going in the right direction.”

According to the UN Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs ([OCHA](#)), this is the fifth time on record that Dominica has taken a direct hit from a hurricane, but never has it faced a storm of such ferocity and strength. The hurricane brought life in Dominica to a standstill.

“What was shocking to me was that the island, which was known as ‘the nature island of the Caribbean,’ was almost totally brown [in the wake of the category 5 storm]. But now, the green has started to come back,” he said, noting that this progress is being matched on the ground, where the situation has begun to stabilize.

Garbage is now being collected and roads are opening up, noted Mr. O’Malley, adding that power has come back to the capital, Roseau, and a few other locations.

“We are able to reach almost everybody now, and we are getting food water and basic supplies out to people,” he said, cautioning at the same time that there will certainly be major challenges ahead.

He explained that the World Food Programme ([WFP](#)), working with the Government, has distributed 60 metric tonnes of food last week to about 30,000 people, which is about half the population, and that more than 40 UN agency workers are on the ground to help the population.

The Government has asked the UN to work with it on a logistics plan to ensure regular delivery of relief supplies. “The Government is also focused on its recovery plan,” said Mr. O’Malley, noting that Dominican officials will head to Washington, D.C. and present the details during the Fall Meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

“What we need to do now in Dominica is keep up this regular supply of the basics for people. Make sure the electricity comes up; getting people’s water supplies up; and getting markets open again; as well as health centres,” he explained, adding that the Government was also looking at ways to “get the economy off the ground,” especially as the reconstruction effort would be massive.

He went on to recall that the UN, its partners and the Government has last week launched an [emergency appeal](#) for \$31.1 million to reach 65,000 people over the next three weeks.

Responding to a question, he said that looking at the broad swathe of devastation across Dominica, Antigua and Barbuda, Turks and Caicos, and other islands and territories that were affected by this summer’s series of category five storms, Mr. O’Malley said the recovery, over time, could cost as much as \$1 billion, though he stressed there were no exact figures.

“It’s going to be a large-scale rebuilding effort that will take time,” he said.

---

## Global Goals embraced by Japanese society, UN deputy chief says, wrapping up Tokyo visit

3 October 2017 – Concluding her three-day visit to Japan today, United Nations Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed today noted how much the Japanese society has embraced the Sustainable Development Goals ([SDGs](#)) as a compass guiding to a more prosperous future for themselves.

“Throughout my visit, I have been impressed to see how much [SDGs](#) are embraced enthusiastically in Japan by the business community represented by Japan Business Federation (*Keidanren*), civil society, media, and young students,” said Ms. Mohammed.

Referring to her visit to the Paralympic Support Center at the Nippon Foundation, which is extremely inclusive in its barrier-free structure and in its workforce, as well as her meeting with the ‘Tokyo2020’ Olympic and Paralympic Games Organizing Committee, she expressed her high expectation that taking Paralympic sport as starting point, Japan would open up towards people with disabilities as a whole. The Deputy Secretary-General shared these observations in her meeting with Foreign Minister Kono Taro today.

Ms. Mohammed also paid a visit to the exhibition at JICA World Square on ethical fashion titled “Fashion as Action: Supporting Sustainable Society Through Clothes.” The exhibition explains how consumers can contribute to sustainable development by being sensitive to how fashion items they buy are produced and disposed. The Deputy Secretary-General was extremely impressed with how these messages were communicated with fun in an innovative way.



Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed pays courtesy call on Shinichi Kitaoka, President of Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). Photo: UNIC Tokyo/Takashi Okano



Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed pays courtesy call on Taro Kono, Minister of Foreign Affairs on Japan. Photo: UNIC Tokyo/Takashi Okano



Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed attends a working luncheon with heads of UN agencies in Japan at United Nations University. Photo: UNIC Tokyo/Takashi Okano

