Resolution on child undernutrition and malnutrition in developing countries

2014/2853(RSP) - 27/11/2014 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 500 votes to 7, with 42 abstentions, a resolution tabled by its Committee on Development on child undernutrition and malnutrition in developing countries.

Members stressed that the causes of child undernutrition are numerous, and that most of them are man-made and therefore avoidable.

These include:

- inefficient economic structures,
- unequal distribution and/or unsustainable use of resources,
- poor governance,
- over-reliance on individual crops and monocultural cropping practices,
- discrimination against women and children,
- and ill-health caused by deficient health systems, together with lack of education, especially for mothers.

The right to food: Members insisted that public authorities must guarantee the three dimensions of the **right to food and good nutrition: availability**, meaning that it is possible either to feed oneself directly from productive land or other natural resources, or to establish well-functioning distribution, processing and market systems; **accessibility**, meaning that both economic and physical access to food is guaranteed; and **adequacy**, meaning that food must be safe and satisfy the dietary needs of every individual.

Long-term integrated approach: Members reaffirmed that addressing child and maternal undernutrition requires an integrated approach and coordinated action in a number of sectors which influence undernutrition (health, education, agriculture, water, energy access and sanitation). The Commission and the Member States are called upon to adopt consistent long-term development strategies. It is necessary for the EU to increase the support provided by its development aid programmes for **sustainable smallholder, peasant and medium-scale agriculture production for – primarily – local consumption**.

Scaling-Up Nutrition: Parliament stressed the importance of political will in addressing undernutrition. It welcomed the Road Map for Scaling-Up Nutrition (SUN) developed by the United Nations. It also welcomed the Commission’s commitment to investing EUR 3.5 billion between 2014 and 2020 in improving nutrition in some of the world’s poorest countries.

It called on the Commission and the Member States to mobilise long-term financial investments and resources for nutrition in cooperation with actors including UN agencies, the G8/G20, emerging countries, international and non-governmental organisations, academic institutions, civil society organisations and the private sector, and to identify nutrition as a **priority for innovative financing**.

Promoting the role of women: Parliament stressed that women play a crucial role in child nutrition and food security. It pointed that although 60% of chronic hunger affects women and girls, women produce 60-80% of the food in developing countries. Women, although responsible for approximately 80% of farming in Africa, formally own as little as 2% of the land. Members called for the inclusion of the gender dimension and promotion of women’s empowerment in all policies aimed at fighting child undernutrition.

Specific measures are called for pregnant women, literacy in women and girls and the fight against child malnutrition in urban settings.

Crucial challenge: Parliament emphasised that failure to address child undernutrition in a timely manner in both development cooperation and humanitarian intervention is likely to threaten **all dimensions of human development**, to undermine national education programmes, to burden national health expenditure and to hamper the socioeconomic development of developing countries, causing them economic losses that have been estimated at 2-8% of their GDP.

The Commission and the Member States should to mainstream nutrition, food safety and sustainable agriculture in all their development policies with a view to protecting and promoting nutrition and ensuring a **holistic approach** from the local to the global level.

Parliament considered that nutrition should be prioritised as a **key development goal** in development cooperation instruments, notably the 11th EDF and the new Development Cooperation Instrument.

The governments of developing countries to create an enabling environment for better child nutrition encourage greater transparency in developing countries' budgets in this field.

Lastly, the Commission is called upon to involve the Member States that have acceded to Expo 2015 to launch a joint initiative taking as its point of departure 'Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life', with a view to securing commitments and binding targets for combating hunger and undernutrition.