

U.N. official: Obesity No. 1 threat to global health

By Melissa Healy, Los Angeles Times

The United Nations' leading voice on hunger has declared that the international community must mobilize to combat obesity and unhealthy diets, not a lack of food, and called on U.N. members to rally around a "bold framework" of regulations limiting access to salty, sugary foods that are high in saturated fats and contribute to obesity.

Olivier De Schutter, special rapporteur to the U.N. on the right to food, said Monday that the global struggle against tobacco use offered a model for efforts to stem the rising tide of obesity and poor nutrition in countries both developed and developing.

De Schutter renewed his call for a raft of measures proposed in his 2012 report to the United Nations Human Rights Council, including the imposition of taxes and other regulations on unhealthy foods, crackdowns on the marketing of junk foods, an overhaul of agricultural subsidies that drive down the costs and drive up availability of some unhealthy foods (including sweeteners), and increased support for local food production.

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