

# FOR THE SAKE OF MEXICO'S CHILDREN AND CHILDREN OF THE WORLD, DEFEND THE TAX ON SUGAR-SWEETENED BEVERAGES

## To President Enrique Peña Nieto To the Legislators of Mexico To the People of Mexico

The undersigned international organizations, who constitute a leading voice in global public health, represent hundreds of organizations with hundreds of thousands of members dedicated to protecting children and consumers, to combatting malnutrition in all its forms, and to promoting food security and health equity. We have watched with interest and respect Mexico's groundbreaking implementation of a national tax of 1 peso per liter (10%) on sugar-sweetened beverages since 2014, **which has already shown positive benefits by reducing consumption and providing an example for the entire world as an obesity prevention and public health measure.**

Overweight, obesity, cardiovascular disease, cancer and diabetes are threatening our families, especially the poor, and our health systems worldwide. Moreover, lobbying by the industries that are driving the chronic disease pandemic globally and in Mexico—the very industries that need to be regulated—threatens the rights of our peoples and governments around the world to do what is necessary to guarantee our peoples' human rights to food and health.

In the case of Mexico, the fact that 58% to 85% of the population is consuming levels of sugar above World Health Organization recommendations and that 70% of the added sugar in the Mexican diet is coming from sugar-sweetened beverages is alarming. Serious measures are required to reduce these levels of consumption.

**We express our deep concern over industry lobbying pressure to reduce this groundbreaking tax in Mexico to 5%** for beverages containing 5 grams of added sugars or less per 100 milliliters. If this reduction is allowed to occur, **the population most affected would be the children of Mexico**, since many drinks that would receive a lower tax are designed for and marketed to children, such as flavored waters and fruit-flavored drinks containing added sugars or a combination of sugar and artificial sweeteners. This would make unhealthy drinks more accessible to children and youth.

Additionally, we see that drinks marketed to the general population that purport to be "healthier options" but that provide unnecessary added sugar to the diet, would also receive a lower tax, sending a misleading message that some sugary drinks are "healthy options."

Regular consumption of sugary drinks and, especially, habituating children to drinking sweetened beverages is a threat to their health. Mexico already has one of the highest childhood obesity rates in the world, and projections indicate that 1 in 3 Mexican children born after 2010 will suffer diabetes in their lifetime with grave effects for their families and your national economy.

We appeal to you to protect the Mexican people, especially children and the poor, by heeding the recommendations of experts working in the public interest and international bodies, such as the Pan American Health Organization and Mexico's National Institute of Public Health, **to sustain the tax on all sugar-sweetened beverages and to increase it 20%.**

Societies and governments around the world must stand strong to protect our children and to shield public health policies from lobbying by self-interested companies. **We stand with you in all efforts to provide real access to nutritious food and health for Mexican children and the Mexican people.**

