



12 June 2014 –The obesity epidemic is spreading, and ‘junk food’ is to blame. 2.1 billion people in the world are overweight or obese, and at least 2.8 million die every year because of their weight according to a [report](#) presented by UN Special Rapporteur on the right to health, Anand Grover.

UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Olivier De Schutter [has stated](#) that the warning signs are being ignored and that along with obesity the linked health issues are steadily rising. Junk foods are primarily responsible for the burgeoning rates of obesity and non-communicable diseases across the world.

“ ‘Junk food’ is not a simple public health issue or a medical concern, it poses a serious challenge to our lives, our health and our rights,” Special Rapporteur Grover added. He furthermore urged the international community to deal with the alarming increase in deaths from diet-related diseases. There has been a social transition towards unhealthy diets the report finds. This can be linked to aggressive marketing, transnational companies and ultra-processed food amongst other factors.

The human rights expert also underlined “the key role of the food industry in addressing the

deleterious trend of unhealthy foods” and urged the industry to refrain from activities undermining people’s right to health. To reverse the obesity epidemic, Grover urged States to implement their human rights obligations, not only by providing nutritious food but also by instituting measures to reduce the burden of diseases linked to ‘junk food.’

In particular, the Special Rapporteur recommended that States formulate multi-sectoral policies with a view to promote the availability and accessibility of healthy and nutritious foods, regulating marketing and advertising of ‘junk food’ and establishing accountability mechanisms for violations of the right to health. Where legislation is in place to discourage unhealthy foods and promote healthier options, Grover urged food and beverage companies to comply with such laws and stop any activity undermining them.