



On the occasion of the Comprehensive Review and Assessment of the Progress achieved in the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases. General Assembly 10-11 July 2014

## **Call for reaffirmation of the 2011 Political Declaration and effective safeguards against conflicts of interest.**

The Conflict of Interest Coalition/Network \* was founded in June 2011 at this Assembly with a specific objective to help safeguard the United Nation's integrity and independence and to ensure its ability to protect health and public health policy setting from commercial influence when dealing with policies related to noncommunicable diseases (NCDs).

Our '*Statement of Concern*', sent to the UN President and the co-facilitators of the UN High Level Meeting on NCDs in September 2011, focuses on the lack of clarity regarding the role of corporations and their business interest associations in public policy-making and the urgent need to identify, manage and avoid conflicts of interest.

The Statement has been endorsed by 162 public health groups and networks representing more than 2,000 groups in most Member States and relates to the marketing of unhealthy foods, alcohol and tobacco products that continue to be a major contributor to the annual toll of 36 million deaths due to NCDs.

As new multi- and bi-lateral trade agreements are emerging, it is critically important that the UN and WHO, as the lead authority on this issue, support and defend Member States' rights and duty to protect public health through effective legally-binding controls on marketing.

We are calling on the UN to recognize the need for clarity and action on both individual and institutional conflicts of interest and propose that the following definitions may be useful:

*"[Individual] conflicts of interest are defined as circumstances that create a risk that professional judgements or actions regarding a primary interest will be unduly influenced by a secondary interest."*

*"Institutional conflicts of interest arise when an institution's own financial interest or those of its senior officials pose risks of undue influence on decisions involving the institution's primary interests."*<sup>1</sup>

### **Reference:**

1 Lo, B. and M. Field, Inst of Med. (US) Committee on Conflict of Interest in Medical Research, Education and Practice, Eds. (2009).

\* The Conflict of Interest Network (COIN) is the formally constituted organisation that builds on the Conflict of Interest Coalition Statement.

*The Conflicts of Interest Coalition comprises 162 civil society organisations united by the common objective of safeguarding public health policy-making against commercial conflicts of interest through the development of a Code of Conduct and Ethical Framework for interactions with the private sector.*