



International Baby Food Action Network - IBFAN
Red internacional de grupos pro alimentación infantil
Réseau international des groupes d'action pour
l'alimentation infantile

Geneva Infant Feeding Association - GIFA

1998 Recipient of the Right Livelihood Award



**Statement by IBFAN, 136th EB,
Agenda item 6.3**

Update on the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity

IBFAN, a global network protecting breastfeeding and Infant and Young Child Feeding was pleased to join the NGO Hearing of the Commission on Ending Childhood Obesity. However we have some reservations about its procedures, which could be setting some risky precedents.

The Echo Private Sector Hearing illustrates the problem. A wide range of corporations were invited on the same basis as were true public interest NGOs. Yet these corporations systematically violate WHA recommendations and aggressively market the unhealthy foods that WHO tries to discourage. Where were the fisher-folk and small farmers who should be WHO's natural allies in bringing about a return to sustainable healthy food systems? The same concern applies to WHO's Global Coordinating Mechanism on NCDs

Carefully scrutinised hard data about markets and tactics could help inform decision-making. But rarely are corporations willing to provide it. Instead they offer opinions, and legally non-binding Corporate Social Responsibility promises, such as to help with education – despite WHO and the EU repeatedly warning of the risks of such involvement.

Will such close involvement help ECHO reach a consensus in the public interest? Already the meeting reports seem to have been affected.

Will the multitude of nutritional challenges be solved by persuading powerful companies to take small steps – so that the whole world may have better access to 'slightly-better-for-you' highly processed foods? We doubt it.

Next week EU Member States will discuss an EU Directive that is totally at odds with WHO's International Code on formula marketing. How many Member States will go home from this meeting and bring in effective regulations that protect child health rather than the formula market?

Finally – we stress that the success of ECHO and other similar initiatives, is closely tied to the NSA Framework and whether it will contain adequate Conflict of Interest safeguards.

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