Thank you, Chair, for giving me the opportunity to address the distinguished members of the World Health Assembly on behalf of MMI and the PHM.

WHO is being undermined in its capacity to promote global health; by underfunding, tight earmarking of donor funding and the opening of spaces for corporate influence.

The present draft of the proposed Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors is contested, obscure and complex. It does not provide a robust framework to prevent improper influence.

Corporate interests which run counter to public health interests are the pre-eminent risk arising from WHO’s engagement with non-state actors. There have been several incidents of improper influence in recent years, all involving large transnational corporations. These include: the IMPACT debate, the EWG process, virus sharing in the context of PIP and lobbying by the sugar industry and related ultra-processed food industries against the WHO recommendation of a 5% ceiling on sugar intake.

The proposed protocols say nothing about the accountability of the Member States for protecting WHO’s integrity. However, in several of the above cases Member States were involved in initiatives which created risks for the integrity and decision making of the Organization.

WHO is under continuing pressure to treat corporations as equal and legitimate ‘partners’ and ‘stakeholders’ in public affairs. Proposals for ‘multi-stakeholder partnerships’ would designate junk food manufacturers as partners in the task of addressing obesity, heart disease and stroke.

We urge delegates to defend the integrity and independence of the World Health Organisation and to take such time as is necessary to achieve a robust framework to protect the Organization from improper influence.