

International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN)



140th Executive Board January 2017

Agenda Item 14.3 Engagement with non-State actors.

IBFAN is one of WHO's longest-standing partners. Our work since Halfden Mahler's time – has centred on WHA Resolutions that have saved countless infant lives.

IBFAN is anxious that WHO emerges from the FENSA process as the lead agency in public health, able to fulfill its constitutional mandate and not be relegated a limited role in a 'multi-stake-holderised' global health architecture. Through ill-defined terms such as 'partnership' 'stake-holder' and 'trust' corporations claim the right to participate in public health decision-making processes, sidelining governments, the UN and peoples' human rights.

Despite this, FENSA was adopted - with promises of due diligence and increased transparency, and that WHO would *“exercise particular caution...when engaging with private sector entities ...whose policies or activities are negatively affecting human health..”*

The DG report further promotes this notion.

The first five applications for Official Relations are a test of its thoroughness. The Gates Foundation application is an example that has prompted a new letter to the EB from 35 organisations. That the Foundation has made substantial contributions to WHO and many health initiatives is matter of public record. That it might have an influence on WHO's nutrition policy setting– for good or for bad – we make no judgement here - is also no secret.

Less well known are its substantial investments in food and beverage industries – investments that are merely noted in the report as: *“engagements with select members of the pharmaceutical... food and beverage...health care... industries in pursuit of our public health goals.”*

The FENSA process could have provided clarity on the relationship between WHO and the Foundation. This opportunity has been lost, and public trust that the process will tackle the task ahead properly has been severely damaged.

We ask that the Gates decision be delayed, 'stakeholder' defined and FENSA reviewed and evaluated as soon as possible.

For more information contact:

Patti Rundall: prundall@babymilkaction.org +44 7786 523493

Camille Selleger: camille.selleger@gifa.org

