

Meeting:

EB Special session on the draft Thirteenth General Programme of Work

Agenda Item:

3. Draft Thirteenth General Programme of Work

Statement:

IBFAN welcomes the opportunity to comment on the draft Programme and will focus on WHO's constitutional mandate and duty to protect its *independence, integrity and trustworthiness*.

IBFAN fears that the draft plan contains suggestions that will undermine WHO's capacity to fulfill its constitutional mandate and core functions. We are pleased that suggestions are still welcome, and hope this EB will allow time for a deeper analysis. This cannot only be about adding suggestions.

Firstly, IBFAN challenges the statement that the SDGs are "*consistent with WHO's Constitution*." This assertion is justified by quoting the Constitutional principle that the "*health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security and is dependent on the fullest cooperation of individuals and states*." This is false. The principle does not justify turning WHO into an actor, a "*humble catalyst*" in an "*ecosystem of partnerships*" that must show its "*competitive advantage*" to attract funding and investments and be assessed along measurable impact targets.

The draft explicitly and implicitly proposes a change to WHO's health governance architecture, that will threaten WHO's capacity to fulfill three constitutional core functions:

- To act as the directing and coordinating authority in international health work (Art.2a)
- To propose conventions, agreements and regulations.... (Art.2k)
- To assist in developing an informed public opinion among all peoples on matters of health (Art. 2r)

As a long-standing corporate accountability network, IBFAN is concerned that WHO's role in regulation and norm-setting is being reframed and its mandate to build the international Rule of Law undermined. What does this mean for the implementation of the *International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes* or, for other urgently needed Conventions to tackle marketing and other corporate strategies that harm health? In its current form, the Plan will leave even more people behind than has already been the case – and it is these people who will pick up the cost of bad decisions about their health.¹

To enable WHO to fulfill its constitutional mandate, we recommend putting full funding of WHO on the agenda of the Special EB. WHO needs to be freed from its dependency on "voluntary" funders imposed by the long-standing freeze on its assessed contributions.

¹ <http://www.other-news.info/2017/11/the-richest-1-now-own-more-than-50-of-the-worlds-wealth/#more-14481>