

International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN)

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Agenda Item 12.3 - Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescent Health (2016 to 2030): sexual and reproductive health, interpersonal violence and early childhood development (A71/19)

Women's health and early childhood development are inextricably linked. Women's reproductive rights cannot be separated from the child's right to the highest attainable standard of health. Fulfilling these rights requires governments and institutions to provide public Universal Health Coverage accessible to all, without discrimination, meeting the needs of women, adolescents and children as a requisite for gender equality.

IBFAN wishes to highlight the importance of breastfeeding to achieve the Global Strategy goals.

The 2002 Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding recognized breastfeeding as an unparalleled way to provide food for healthy growth and development. Evidence is now available associating not breastfeeding with lower intelligence and yearly economic losses of about \$302 billion globally.

The Global Strategy notes that less than 40% of infants are exclusively breastfed. Considerable efforts are required to address this gap as the threats that undermine breastfeeding persist. The marketing of breastmilk substitutes and baby feeding products remains systemic as demonstrated by IBFAN's global monitoring reports. Much more needs to be done to remove this commercial interference. Regulation, monitoring and enforcement of the provisions of the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and the WHA resolutions are essential to increase breastfeeding practices, decrease the appalling child morbidity and mortality associated with the use of breastmilk substitutes and the high breast cancer and other cancers associated with low breastfeeding rates.

Mothers need adequate paid maternity leave and breastfeeding breaks with workplace capacity to maintain breastfeeding throughout early childhood. Serious gaps exist in policies and programmes to protect, promote and support breastfeeding, as identified by IBFAN's World Breastfeeding Trends Initiative (WBTi). Breastfeeding must be central to policies that are designed to meet the goals of the Global Strategy and the aspirations of all mothers for their children. We urge governments to address this need to achieve gender equity and health for all future generations.

For more information contact:

Patti Rundall, prundall@babymilkaction.org +447786523493

Alessia Bigi alessia.biggi@gifa.org

Elisabeth Sterken esterken@infactcanada.ca

JP Dadhich jpdadhich@bpni.org