



## IBFAN Statements 156th WHO Executive Board Meeting 3-11 February 2025

**Agenda Item 24.2 Involvement of Non State Actors in WHO's Governing Bodies.** read by Patti Rundall. As a critical friend of WHO for 47 years, IBFAN was key to the adoption of the world's first consumer protection tool – a Code of Marketing and 20 Resolutions that are in law – to some extent – in over 100 countries. Despite fierce opposition from industry, these policies have saved millions of children's lives. IBFAN knows that the independence, integrity and trustworthiness of institutions such as WHO must be protected – to empower all governments to protect health in all fora – including in trade where IBFAN works to promote WHO policy. No single country can do what WHO is constitutionally mandated to do. The call to increase assessed contributions is excellent. Please don't forget to screen NSA collaboration and funding for Conflicts of Interest. Thank you

**Agenda 24.4 Engagement with non-State actors Report on the implementation of the Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors** Read by Paola Gaete IBFAN recognises that WHO is under a financial crisis. This is not new and as long as Assessed Contributions are so restricted it will always be so. But using FENSA as a funding source has many reputational risks and threats to WHO's independence, integrity and trustworthiness. The report on FENSA lists many interactions and collaborations but contains no clarity on identities and responsibilities of the NSAs listed and no mention of conflict of interest safeguards. In our experience 'multi-stakeholder' collaborations with health-harming corporations, who have no democratic accountability, delay the effective action needed. With so many crises it is more important than ever that WHO remembers its over-arching principle to prevent manage and avoid undue influence interference of private sector entities in public health policy development.

**Agenda 15. WHO's work in health emergencies:** Read by Patti Rundall Infant mortality rises when inappropriate donations disrupt breastfeeding - a resilient practice that provides food, care and immune protection in the all emergencies, including the severest. Please note a new draft Codex Guideline that will allow labelling exemptions in emergencies. This maybe fine for some products, but very risky for baby foods. IBFAN has documented how improperly labelled 'humanitarian donations' are exploited to create new markets for risky products. IBFAN is a founding member of Infant Feeding in Emergencies group, set up to ensure coordinated emergency responses, such as 'kangaroo mother care', re-lactation and 'skin-to-skin' contact that significantly improve infant survival. With so many climate and conflict crises WHO must ensure that its emergency guidance is not influenced by commercial agendas and that food distribution does no unintended harm for mothers and children.

**Agenda 7. Follow-up to the political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of NCDs** Read by Paola Gaete IBFAN participated in the development of the first Political Declaration on the prevention and control of NCDs, and also many subsequent WHO Global Strategies, Reports, Guides, Tools and Action Plans. One of the over-arching principles has always been the prevention, management and avoidance of the undue influence and interference of health harming entities in public health policy development. Despite many references to 'Multi Stakeholder' engagement in the report there are no references to Conflicts of Interest safeguards. If the new Political Declaration on NCDs is to be genuinely based on evidence and grounded in human rights, the original over-arching principle must not be forgotten. Otherwise its aim is likely to be derailed

**Item 6. Universal Health coverage** read by Anna Koronkiewicz-Wiórek IBFAN strongly supports the right to access to free and adequate healthcare. However, to be effective, strong conflicts of interest safeguards are needed to prevent health harming industries hijacking the process. Prevention is critical and starts with optimal early years feeding: breastfeeding and the avoidance of ultra-processed products. Companies know exactly how to process raw ingredients to achieve sweetness while claiming products are healthy. They know that sweetness is addictive and sets up taste preferences in children. For the new Codex baby foods standard – products often high in free sugars, please send health delegates to Codex so that WHO recommendations are followed. Also that marketing legislation covers all products marketed for children, including plant-based formulas, bottles and teats

**14. Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health** Read by Dr Marina Rea. IBFAN welcomes the draft Resolution and urges all to support it. Mothers are being bombarded by misleading marketing online. In one click health authority advice is disregarded. This has long-term consequences for child health and survival. There are 144 national laws based on the International Code and when these are enforced breastfeeding rates improve. However, many laws do not include the 20 resolutions that keep pace with new marketing strategies and the ultra-processed products for children that are causing so much harm. There is no need for significant resources to enforce this Resolution. Governments must allocate specific legal duties to the social media platforms and service providers who have control over their content. Governments must follow the WHO Guidance that this Resolution is about.

**Agenda Item: 20 The impact of chemicals, waste and pollution on human health**. Read by Anna Koronkiewicz-Wiórek. IBFAN appreciates WHO's support for this work. Prenatal and postnatal exposure to toxic chemicals can harm children's health. In some highly contaminated areas even breastfeeding may be at risk. However, in most cases the benefits of breastfeeding will be greater than harm caused by such contamination. Breastfeeding confers immuno-protective factors and helps build children's lifelong immune system. Infant feeding products and packaging are inherently risky and contain plastics and Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals which impact on babies' immune, reproductive and endocrine systems. WHO must continue work on the Global Plastics Treaty to develop a legally binding instrument on plastic pollution and protect the health of all children and their environment from toxic chemicals, while ensuring parents receive sound independent information free of commercial influence. Thank you.

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