Statement to the 136th Session of the WHO Executive Board
on agenda item 5.1 Framework of Engagement with Non-State Actors

Thank you, Chair, for giving me the opportunity of addressing the distinguished Members of the WHO Executive Board on behalf of Medicus Mundi International and the People's Health Movement.

We thank WHO for reporting on the Regional Committees' deliberations and the revised draft Framework of Engagement with non-State actors. We consider this Framework a crucial aspect of the Reform. To a large extent it determines the future legitimacy and authority of WHO as the leading agency in international health policy making.

We are concerned that the new draft Framework does not respond to two crucial requests made by Member States. The first request was to clarify the rationale for widening engagement with the private sector. The second request was to clarify conflict of interest safeguards. These omissions risk opening up new channels for corporate influence, as well as further institutionalizing the ones existing already.

MMI and PHM urge Member States to insist that the Framework explicitly acknowledge the underlying conflict between the mandates of corporate actors on the one hand and WHO on the other. To achieve clarity on the concept of conflicts of interest safeguards, this could be pursued through an expert technical consultation on conflicts of interest, informed by independent experts on conflict of interest and corporate accountability.

Finally, we understand that WHO has difficulty to resist giving private funders more influence, but this approach may ultimately weaken WHOs capacity to fulfill its mandate. The constitutional, long term solution is different. Member States will have to lift their longstanding freeze on assessed contributions. This would liberate WHO from a donor dependence that is very problematic from the point of view of democratic global governance for health.

Thank you.

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