

Statement to the 69th World Health Assembly

Agenda item 12.1 Maternal, infant and young child nutrition.

Thank you, Chair, for giving me the opportunity to address the distinguished members of the WHA on behalf of Medicus Mundi International and the People's Health Movement.

PHM supports IBFAN's concerns with the latest draft of the Resolution to adopt the Guidance.

PHM is concerned that although the International Code was adopted 35 years ago, and the resolution WHA34.22 (1981) that established it urged all Member States to implement it "in its entirety", only 39 countries have laws enacting all provisions. In our view this constitutes an emergency, especially given recent evidence published in the Lancet showing additional major positive impact on brain and physical development conferred by breastfeeding.

Encouragement to Member States to implement the code is welcome but insufficient. We welcome the establishment of NetCode to jointly monitor national implementation but suggest that additionally WHO, working with expert non-state actors such as IBFAN, should assist Member States to identify the specific obstacles in their countries to implement the Code and subsequent WHO Resolutions. Further, WHO should provide Member States with specific guidance regarding best practices that have successfully limited the influence of the baby food industry in circumventing the Code.

We welcome the call for recommendations on the marketing of foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children to be fully implemented. We are, however, concerned that this recommendation concludes with the vague statement that "A range of strategies should be implemented to limit the consumption by infants and young children of foods that are unsuitable for them." Given the accumulating evidence of the role of the unregulated production, promotion and marketing of unhealthy foods to mothers of infants and young children; the WHO should assist Member States to develop regulatory policies to mitigate the adverse influence of the food industry and liberalization of trade and investment in the food and beverage sector.

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