



International Baby Food Action Network - IBFAN
Red internacional de grupos pro alimentación infantil
Réseau international des groupes d'action pour
l'alimentation infantile

Geneva Infant Feeding Association - GIFA

1998 Recipient of the Right Livelihood Award



Statement by IBFAN, Agenda item A67/6

Statement on WHO reform: Over-arching Framework for engagement with non State Actors.

I speak on behalf of IBFAN, a global network of 273 organisations working to protect, promote and support breastfeeding and Infant and Young Child Feeding.

*We thank WHO for spelling out that the aim of the policy of engagement with non-State actors is to protect its « integrity, independence, and credibility ». However, the proposed Framework still falls short of what Member States, after having rejected a multi-stakeholder Global Health Forum, mandated WHO to do: to strengthen dialogue and cooperation with other stakeholders **“as appropriate** while taking into account the importance of... managing **conflicts of interest**.”¹*

The current Framework opens up floodgates to increased influences by transnational corporations and philanthropies in various ways:

- 1. It accepts into Official Relations as legitimate entities to participate in the WHO's governing bodies both business associations and venture philanthropies, thus not taking into account the request for WHO to reverse the trend of accrediting actors whose primary aim, by nature cannot be in “conformity with the spirit... of WHO's constitution”².*
- 2. In the name of ‘inclusiveness’, it also opens other channels for corporate and donor influence: these include “resources” such as “staff secondment”, “pro-bono work”; and “participation” at all kind of meetings, as well as “support to policy making”.*
- 3. The Framework says that WHO takes a “risk management approach to engagement”; the words “conflict of interest” and “undue influence” appear frequently. Observers may thus feel that risks are addressed. Yet, when examined closely, the risk assessment is based on a misconception of conflict of interest theory³. Institutional CoI are not about a conflict between **“WHO's work”** and **“vested interest”** of a non-state actor. They are about the risk of WHO's constitutional mandate and functions being unduly influenced by WHO's own secondary interest, e.g. its efforts to secure funding.*

¹ 2011, EBSS/2/DIV/2 (g)

² Para 48

³ Para 24

