



70th World Health Assembly – Geneva, May 2017

IBFAN statement on Agenda Item 15.1: Preparation for the 3rd High-level Meeting of the UN General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases in 2018

I speak on behalf of IBFAN. This statement is supported by FIAN International. We have watched with growing alarm as the GCM gives disproportionate promotion to corporations that not only promote unhealthy foods, but are involved in land-grabbing, monocropping - undermining access to bio-diverse wholesome foods and environmental resources. GCM is not heeding WHO's FENSA requirement to "exercise particular caution...when engaging with private sector entities ...whose policies or activities are negatively affecting human health."

Surely small farmers, health workers, town planners and teachers are much more important agents in addressing the NCD challenge? Precious time and resources are being wasted on persuading corporations to produce slightly less harmful junk foods. This will not solve the problem. The GCM has been following the EU Platform on Diet, Physical Activity and Health model – an initiative that after 9 years has failed to curb harmful marketing practices.

GCM annual self-reporting mechanism 'encourages' NSAs to submit actions within their core area of business. However marketing strategies posing as health initiatives could be registered and could gain credibility from the image transfer from WHO. The baby food industry hijacking of World Breastfeeding Week, is just one example. The promotion of voluntary – here today, gone tomorrow – initiatives, can also undermine government resolve to bring in effective legislation. Since WHO does not currently have the capacity to 'quality assure' activities and guarantee conformity with WHO policy this idea should be

abandoned. It is far too risky.

Last, we call for consistent messaging. Over-emphasis on micronutrients opens the door to promotional claims on ultra processed foods. The public is mostly unaware that high heat processing and storage can destroy essential nutrients. One could stare at a piece of mango all day and not see it for the nutrients it contains. Whereas a glance at a package laden with nutrition claims immediately inspires false confidence.

We are keen to continue working with WHO to address this challenge. Thank you.