

International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN)

71st session of the World Health Assembly



Agenda Item 11.7 - Preparation for the third High-level Meeting of the General Assembly on the Prevention and Control of Non-communicable Diseases, to be held in 2018 (A71/14 and A71/14 Add.1)

IBFAN has supported WHO's leadership role in the control of NCDs for many years. Our aim has been to protect WHO's independence, integrity and trustworthiness in order to maintain its capacity to fulfil its constitutional mandate and core functions - especially to propose conventions, agreements and regulations.

161 NGOs through the Conflict of Interest Coalition, launched at the 1st UNGAS in 2011, demand policy setting free from commercial influence and WHO gives consistent reassurances that its own policy-setting functions are protected. Now as WHO seeks a "fresh working relationship" with food and related industries the World Economic Forum is invited in as an 'advisor' on the High-Level Commission of NCDs. WEF represents corporations - whose marketing practices are known to damage health and the environment through deforestation, mono-cropping, land and sea grabbing and risky technologies - all of which have an impact on NCDs and the right to food. This threatens the direction of WHO's work, undermines the status of the Assembly and Member States' concerns and confidence in WHO's recommendations to Member States - many of whom struggle to avoid undue influence from the Private Sector.

The draft report blatantly promotes business-friendly recommendations - Public Private Partnerships, self-regulation and technological fixes - with no acknowledgement of risks, or any evidence of their effectiveness - (and no mention of baby food marketing regulations or sugar) is clear evidence of commercial influence. If translated into advice for Member States, effective strategies to protect public health will be undermined and delayed. Governments need to be in the driver's seat with a clear assessment of their national situation based on hard data, with goals and a clear strategy regarding the private sector.

Suggesting that PPPs are the answer flies in the face of all the evidence. We strongly urge a rethink on WHO's strategy on NCDs.

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