

**To the organisers of the meeting *Breastmilk Substitutes: Lessons Learned*, 30 November-1 December 2017, Frankfurt :**

As was indicated in the Dissent Note that our colleagues, Dr Lida Lhotska and Yeong Joo Kean issued on behalf of IBFAN Global Council, IBFAN issued a Call to Action to colleagues and allies about our concerns with the proposed Global Monitoring Mechanism (GMM).

Please see attached the list of 60 groups and 43 individuals who are joining our call that this risky GMM process should stop. We will continue to collect signatures from those who are opposed to what the GMM process would entail – a multi-stakeholder partnership. We believe that this conflicts with the fundamental rule of natural justice that no one should be the judge of his own cause. We firmly believe that what you are initiating will set back all the good work that international agencies, governments and civil society have done to protect infant and young child health.

Some may say that the Frankfurt meeting is only *a learning and creative exchange*, a continuation of a dialogue. However, 'dialogues' with industries such as this one, have their serious limits and risks. Experience shows that any "openness" on the part of corporate actors depends upon how far the corporation in question is able to put aside its profit-maximisation interests. Limits are set by what public relations (PR) theorists, business ethicists and managers call a corporation's 'enlightened self-interest'.

The PR literature is candid about what dialogues bring to corporate actors. It outlines three overall corporate agendas for such dialogues:

- To gather intelligence and assess the general socio-political climate;
- To conduct persuasive campaigns aimed at establishing public consent to industry views;
- To neutralise critical voices.

Indeed, such dialogues are powerful. So much so that government and UN officials and NGOs, find their attention and energy diverted from their own public interest agendas because of the dynamics of corporate dialogues.

While we may not be in a position to stop the Frankfurt meeting, IBFAN calls on Meridian Institute to continue with their practice of transparency regarding IBFAN's position and table this Call of Action and our Dissent Note at the meeting. We also ask you to kindly let the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation and those attending the meeting know that there are many groups and individuals working in the field of infant and young child feeding who are opposed to what is being planned, and will continue to oppose the initiative should it be rolled out.

Thank you very much for your attention.



Alessia Bigi  
On behalf of IBFAN