



# Conflicts of Interest Coalition

Submission to WHO consultation of multisectoral action for the prevention and control of NCDs through effective partnership

April 2012

The attached Statement of Concern was developed by the Conflicts of Interest Coalition (COIC) and was submitted to the President of the UN General Assembly in September 2011. It has now been endorsed by 161 national, regional and global networks and organisations working in different fields of public health, including medicine, nutrition, cancer, diabetes, heart, liver and lung disease, mental health, infant feeding, food safety and development.

In addition to the submissions made by individual organisations to this consultation, we request that the principles and recommendations of this Statement are applied to all areas of WHO's public health policy setting, but in particular to its work on NCDs.

The statement focuses on the lack of clarity regarding the role of the private sector in public policy-making and calls for the development of a Code of Conduct and Ethical Framework to help protect the integrity of WHO's public policy decision-making, to ensure it is transparent and to identify, safeguard against and manage potential conflicts of interest.

*The Statement calls for:*

- a clear distinction to be made between business-interest not-for-profit organisations (BINGOs) and public interest non-governmental organisations (PINGOs)
- a clear differentiation between policy and norms and standards development and appropriate involvement in implementation.

Since the major causes of preventable death are driven by diseases related to tobacco, poor diet, physical inactivity and alcohol drinking, the endorsers of the Statement are concerned about the overuse of the term 'partnerships' - without any clarification of what this term means. We remain concerned that public-private partnerships in these areas can counteract efforts to protect and improve public health.

We call on WHO to develop guidance for Member States to identify conflicts and eliminate those that are not permissible. We ask that WHO perform thorough risk/benefit analyses on partnerships and provide surveillance on those considered acceptable.

Transparency, although an essential requirement and first step, is not a sufficient safeguard in and of itself against negative impacts of conflicts of interest.