

P R E S S R E L E A S E

New WHO proposals could open the door to business lobbying

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WHO has published a draft proposal for a set [Framework and set of policies to address its engagement with Non State Actors](#) (NSAs). Member States are being invited to discuss these proposals at WHO's HQ in Geneva on 27th and 28th March. Public Interest NGOs are not invited. IBFAN has been following the process closely and finds serious flaws, inconsistencies and contradictions in the proposals.

Despite the many statements of WHO's Director General, Margaret Chan, that WHO's policies, norms and standards setting processes should be protected from commercial influence, if the new proposals were to be adopted, the corporate influence would increase. IBFAN fears that this would compromise WHO's integrity, independence and its ability to fulfil its mandate.

In particular, the proposals introduce a new risky element, allowing Official Relations status, with all its related privileges, for International Business Associations. Up to now, if businesses wanted to attend governing body meetings in order to lobby Member States delegations, they could wear a public badge, or, if they wanted to speak, inveigle their way onto government delegations. Some, over the years have slipped through WHO's admission procedures, pretending to be NGOs.¹ The new proposals open the door wide to participation by any business member of these Associations, except tobacco or arms companies. This would, in effect, legitimize businesses lobbying role at WHO's global policy-setting meetings - the very thing that WHO alleges that it is trying to avoid. In addition to turning WHO governing bodies meetings into multi-stakeholder public-private gatherings, the proposals would also allow businesses greater engagement at programme level, through agreed 3-year plans with WHO.

Lida Lhotska, IBFAN NGO Liaison to WHO says: "If these new policy proposals are adopted, IBFAN fears that WHO will be unable to lead and support Member States in taking the bold decisions necessary to tackle global health challenges. For example, irresponsible marketing is a major underlying cause of Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs). In tackling NCDs, acknowledged to be a major threat to public health, will WHO prefer to engage in partnerships with corporations, who would prefer campaigns for promoting 'slightly better for you products' – or will WHO help Member States bring in legally-binding controls that truly protect right to health of their citizens?"

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¹ Business front groups that have managed to gain Official NGO status: International Special Dietary Foods Industries (ISDI, representing the baby feeding industry) ISDI lost this status in January 2014, Croplife International (representing Monsanto, Syngenta, Bayer, CropScience, Dow Agrosciences, DuPont and other companies promoting GMO technologies), International Life Sciences Institute (ILSI, representing Nestlé, Coca Cola, Kellogg, Pepsi, Monsanto, Ajinomoto, Danone, General Mills and others) and the Industry Council for Development (representing Nestlé, Mars, Unilever and Ajinomoto).