



Head Office

24 Highbury Crescent
London N5 1RX, UK
Tel: +44 (0)20 7226 6663
Fax: +44 (0)20 7354 0607
e-mail: consint@consint.org
www.consumersinternational.org

Agenda Item 11.3.

Chairperson, honourable delegates,

My name is André Nikiema from the International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN). We appreciate the opportunity to speak on this important issue on behalf of Consumers International, the global federation of consumer organisations worldwide.

We wish to join all those who expressed condolences to Dr. Lee's family and to all staff of WHO of the sudden loss of this outstanding personality in public health.

Consumers International welcome the Secretariat's report A59/7. A decade ago, the dilemma brought about by the fact that HIV can be transmitted via breastfeeding threatened to wipe out all the achievement the world's community made in protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding in 80s and early 90s. The Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative lost its momentum, funding for it dried up and political will to implement it almost disappeared. Rushed decisions to adopt policies containing banked recommendations on artificial feeding were taken in many parts of the world. The relevance of the International Code was often questioned because it was misrepresented and misunderstood as aiming to protect only breastfed babies and their mothers from commercial pressures

The breastfeeding movement has been in the forefront in trying to find solutions for what threatened to be a crisis in child survival revolution. We argued that the world needed to take a closer look; that it was not good enough to pitch breastfeeding against artificial feeding. We wanted the scientists to take seriously the phenomenon of exclusive breastfeeding. The 1999 research findings coming from South Africa opened a window of hope. And now, 7 years later, we are no longer faced with the same dramatic rush to discard breastfeeding. On the contrary, the implementation of both, BFHI and the International Code, are listed among the 5 priority actions the world's community has to take if the HIV and infant feeding element of the mother-to-child transmission is to be successfully addressed and the MDG 4 achieved. This is clearly stipulated in the Framework on Priority Action on HIV and Infant Feeding, adopted by this distinguished Assembly 2 years ago.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the International Code. Many countries have implemented the Code but more efforts need to be put into monitoring and enforcement. For Member States which have not implemented the Code we ask that they do not wait another 25 years to do so.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman