

## INTERNATIONAL LACTATION CONSULTANT ASSOCIATION

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### 120<sup>th</sup> Session of the WHO Executive Board - Provisional Agenda Item 4.8

*Statement by Maryse Lehnert-Arendt, Representative of the International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA), an international NGO in official relations with WHO*

Chairperson,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the 120<sup>th</sup> WHO Executive Board meeting.

Dear delegates, ladies and gentlemen

The International Lactation Consultant Association, ILCA, is an international association open to all health care professionals interested in human lactation. Membership includes nurses, physicians, dietitians, and researchers many of whom are International Board Certified Lactation Consultants.

The present statement is supported by IBFAN, the International Baby Food Action Network

ILCA and IBFAN welcome the draft strategy on gender, women and health developed as a follow up on different international conferences, to name but one the fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in 1995. The proposed strategy will ensure more gender equality and equity in health programmes.

The Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action were adopted by consensus on 15 September 1995. The Platform for Action of Beijing in its strategic objective C1 106(r) calls for “Actions to be taken by Governments, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations employers' and workers' organizations and with the support of international institutions ” to “ Promote public information on the benefits of breast-feeding; examine ways and means of implementing fully the WHO/UNICEF International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes, and enable mothers to breast-feed their infants by providing legal, economic, practical and emotional support:”

Furthermore it requests governments ( 165c) to take action to:

“Eliminate discriminatory practices by employers and take appropriate measures in consideration of women's reproductive role and functions, such as the denial of employment and dismissal due to pregnancy or breast-feeding, or requiring proof of contraceptive use, and take effective measures to ensure that pregnant women, women on maternity leave or women re-entering the labour market after childbearing are not discriminated against;”

Thanks to the research we know today that breastfeeding reduces newborn death by 22% and the under 5 mortality by 13% independently of the gender of the child. We also know that breastfeeding in the first hour after birth, as recommended in the Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative by WHO/UNICEF, reduces the amount of postnatal bleeding, contributing to improved maternal health. It could thus reduce significantly maternal mortality. In the long term breastfeeding over a longer period reduces the woman's risk of breast cancer, ovarian cancer, osteoporosis and diabetes, which means that her health is improved.

IBFAN and ILCA therefore urge all governments to implement the above quoted actions of the Beijing Platform for Action and is ready to support them in this endeavour. The guiding principles for these actions are enshrined in the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child feeding adopted in WHA resolution 55.25.

Thank you