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**Provisional Agenda item 4.6:
Infant and young child nutrition**

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Chairperson, honourable delegates,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to address the 126th session of the EB.

We appreciate the opportunity to speak on the important issue of Infant and Young Child Nutrition on behalf of Consumers International, the global federation of consumer organisations worldwide, which is a founder member of IBFAN, the International Baby Food Action Network.

We welcome the quadrennial progress report EB 126/9, prepared by the Secretariat. We reiterate that breastfeeding is the single most effective intervention for improving the survival and health of children. We emphasise that optimal breastfeeding not only saves the lives of more than one million children under five, but also improves the quality of life of these children who do survive. Undernutrition is a major factor in preventing those children from reaching their full developmental potential. Breastfeeding can help prevent this waste of life and health.

Only a few days ago, a terrible earthquake struck one of the countries not on track to attain MDG4, and affected at least 3 million people. In any emergency, infants and young children are particularly vulnerable to malnutrition, illness and death. As emergency teams are rushing to assist the country, we would like to make a plea to the Executive Board to adopt a strong infant and young child nutrition resolution that further facilitates their work, a resolution that would put emergency preparedness for optimal infant and young child feeding high up on the priority agendas of Member States.

The international community has provided clear operational guidance on infant feeding in emergencies, now fully integrated in the UN Nutrition Cluster's work. An ever-increasing number of international organisations agree on the need to minimise the risks of artificial feeding, including through avoidance of all donations of breastmilk substitutes and feeding bottles. They advocate for proper needs assessment, support for breastfeeding for the majority of infants, and for procurement of breastmilk substitutes through normal channels for the small number of those who have to be fed on these products.

In our view, countries that champion the full implementation of the Global Strategy on Infant and Young Child Feeding are making sure, were any disaster to strike, that all these infants will be protected. That is why IBFAN, on behalf of Consumers International urges, WHO Member States to scale up global action to implement the Global Strategy and thus improve infant and young child feeding practices. In emergency situations as well as in development programmes, coordination is key. To increase coordinated action in all contexts, IBFAN and our partner the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action last year launched the global Breastfeeding Initiative for Child Survival. We call upon government authorities, the health profession and academia to join forces with us, the public-interest civil society groups, to intensify our efforts to attain the health-related Millennium Development Goals.