

Pursuant to Article 34 Para 2 of the Law on the Government of Republika Srpska (“Official Gazette of Republika Srpska”, No. 3/97 and 3/98), at its 73rd session, held on 20 October 1999, the Government of Republika Srpska issued the

D E C I S I O N
ON ADOPTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL MARKETING CODE FOR BREAST-
MILK REPLACEMENTS

Article 1

The Government of Republika Srpska hereby adopts the INTERNATIONAL MARKETING CODE FOR BREAST-MILK REPLACEMENTS, adopted by the Assembly of the World Health Organisation in 1981.

Article 2

The complete text of the Code referred to in Article 1 is an integral part of this Decision. Its application, as a code of conduct, shall be mandatory for those concerned.

Article 3

This Decision shall enter into force on the eighth day from the day of its publication in the “Official Gazette of Republika Srpska”.

No: 02/1-020-1037/99
Banja Luka, 20 October 1999

seal affixed
Prime Minister Milorad Dodik

REPUBLIKA SRPSKA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WELFARE
BANJA LUKA

No: 01-50-2676/99

Date: 19 October 1999

RATIONALE

At its Assembly held in 1981, the World Health Organisation adopted the International Marketing Code for Breast-milk Replacements, which sets forth strict rules regarding marketing and distribution of infant formulas and other breast-milk replacements (but also bottles and pacifiers). The joint WHO-UNICEF document "Innocenti Declaration on Promotion and Support of Breast-Feeding" (1990) requires the member countries accept the Code by 1995 in its entirety, as a minimal basis to be incorporated into national law.

At the WHO Assembly held in May 1994, the Code was unanimously endorsed with the slogan "Protection of breast-feeding from unfair competition of breast-milk replacements", with an explicit ban against all forms of advertising, sale and distribution of these products through the health care system. The Assembly underlined again the obligation of the governments of member countries to implement the principles and aims of the Code (adopted laws and other regulations) and control the application of the Code.

Of similar content was the Joint Statement by UNICEF, WHO, UNHCR and WFP of 15 August 1994 as a "Proposed Policy for Nutrition of Children in former Yugoslavia", with a special appeal addressed to medical staff: "Do not accept donations of infant formulas with a visible trademark of the manufacturer. Instead, learn how to ensure successful breast-feeding"!

In April 1997, a letter arrived from the UNICEF Office warning of "...the opening of the market that is about to happen and the possibility of an easier purchase of breast-milk replacements from abroad. The experience of UNICEF teaches that many multinational companies – infant formula manufacturers are prepared to invest in marketing campaigns or free infant formula supplies in order to gain huge profits in a country. Only a radical and timely operation to prevent the distribution of breast-milk replacements to maternity clinics and the market (marketing) can prevent enormous and unnecessary costs and ensure conditions for a healthy growth and development of children."

Following the model of developed countries, Republika Srpska should, within the framework of the implementation of the Programme of Breast-feeding Promotion in Republika Srpska, adopt the International Marketing Code for Breast-milk Replacements.

By accepting the International Marketing Code for Breast-milk Replacements, we will at the same time underline the protection and support of successful breast-feeding, reaffirm the importance of breast-milk for the harmonious physical and psychological growth and development of the suckling and the infant, protect maternity, and, together with an economic benefit for the family, adverse trends in the field of mother and child health care in Republika Srpska will be stopped.

In early 1997, the Co-ordination Board for Promotion of Breast-Feeding in Republika Srpska was established in Banja Luka. This was the start of the implementation of the UNICEF health care programme "Baby Friendly Hospitals" in Republika Srpska. From the very beginning, the activities focused on the organisation and realisation of seminars for education of medical and other staff regarding this programme, on increasing acceptance of the programme and creation of conditions for the capacities of the existing maternity clinics to be transformed in order to accommodate both mothers and babies together throughout the day.

This includes health centres as providers of primary health care, particularly health care services for women (counselling for pregnant women), health care services for children (counselling for babies), visiting nurses and staff of field clinics. Health education material for pregnant women, mothers and medical staff was prepared and printed.

On 28 and 29 November 1997, a professional meeting of RS pediatricians was held at Dvorovi spa, near Bijeljina. This meeting launched the initiative for the Government of Republika Srpska and the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare to accept the International Marketing Code for Breast-milk Replacements. In July 1998, education was organised for independent evaluators of hospitals in Republika Srpska which wish to become "Baby Friendly Hospitals". Those who attended the course obtained a certificate stating that they may evaluate any hospital in the country or abroad.

From 25 to 28 August 1998, a team of international evaluators evaluated the Gynaecology and Obstetrics Clinic of the Banja Luka Clinical Centre, which applied for this evaluation following long, intensive activities in the implementation of the programme. At the central ceremony in RS organised to mark the World Breast-Feeding Week, held on 6 October 1998 in Banja Luka, a UNICEF representative awarded this Clinic with the "Baby Friendly Hospital" certificate (as proposed by the International Evaluators Team, National BFHI Committee and UNICEF Office).

The implementation of the programme in Republika Srpska is ongoing. The maternity clinic of the Gradiska hospital is expected to be evaluated this year.

For an unimpeded implementation of the programme throughout Republika Srpska, it is necessary to accept the International Marketing Code for Breast-milk Replacements and incorporate it in the laws.

*MINISTER
Dr. Zeljko Rodic*