

QUOTATIONS BY NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS ON

WHO/UNICEF CODE OF MARKETING &

WHO EXECUTIVE BOARD RESOLUTION

World Health Assembly, May 1981

"It also happens that publicity makes us victims of habits and practises which are economically wasteful and wholly contrary to good health. You are all familiar with the controversy over the export of baby foods to developing countries."

-Mrs. Indira Gandhi
(Prime Minister of India)



MRS. VEDER-SMIT (Netherlands):

"On the whole the code, as it now stands, is acceptable to our delegation. Of course, there is always room for criticism on details of the text, but we feel that it is better to make the code work for a few years, after which there is always a possibility for correction.

The draft resolution which the Executive Board has proposed for consideration by the Assembly seems to be a fair and balanced one. We took note of the provision, contained in paragraph 5 of this draft resolution, in which the Director General is requested to make proposals, if necessary, for revision of the text of the code and for the measures needed for its effective application."

DR. USHEWOKUNZE (Zimbabwe):

"There is of course, also the killer in the bottle, the breastmilk substitutes, for which we must prepare the hangman's noose, in the form of the code of marketing. But it is not enough simply to pay lip service to the need for an effective code of marketing for breastmilk substitutes, no code of marketing will work without an effective monitoring mechanism. The Executive Board has recognized this need in its

resolution EB67.R\$2, the Government of Zimbabwe supports this resolution and urges the Director General to take the necessary steps to ensure that the implementation of this code is given careful study during the next two years."

MR. RASMUSSEN (DENMARK):

"WHO and UNICEF, in conjunction with government representatives and organizations and industries, have now agreed upon views and recommendations concerning the regulation of the rules governing the marketing of breastmilk substitutes. We have before us for adoption by the Health Assembly a draft resolution and a recommended international code on marketing of breastmilk substitutes which in its adopted form and content reflects a very delicate act of balance between various interests. I believe that in passing the present draft resolution this Assembly will contribute greatly to achieving the goal in which we all agree - sound infant and young child nutrition.

I have noted that the Executive Board has recommended the present draft unanimously and I would like to stress my Government's favourable attitude and recommendation that the present draft resolution be passed, thus making a significant contribution in the field of health."

PROFESSOR DOGRAMACI (TURKEY):

"It has been recognized that improper marketing of breastmilk substitutes can lead to inappropriate feeding practises resulting in malnutrition, illness and death. We strongly believe that it is imperative to make sure that the marketing of these products does not encourage mothers capable of breastfeeding to bottle-feed instead. To this end an international code of ethics for the marketing of breastmilk substitutes to be adopted as a recommendation, as proposed by the Executive Board, is an extremely important step."

MR. UGWU (NIGERIA):

"We also appeal to the industrialized countries of the world to recognize the great harm they do to the lives of children in developing countries by dumping in these countries baby foods as substitutes of breastmilk, which they back up with intensive advertising. They must be reminded that over 75% of the mothers in many developing countries live in rural villages and are mostly illiterate and not trained in the use of these natural-milk substitutes. The result is that many children die from the abuse of these substitutes while many others suffer all manner of diarrhoeas from the contaminated food. It is easy to advise the developing countries to guard against the abuse of the milk substitutes or to ban them when necessary, but we of the developing countries would be deceiving ourselves if we ignored the power of multinational business concerns which have no place for moral considerations when it comes to maximizing profits."

MME. BEGIN (CANADA):

Canada is strongly committed to the promotion of breastfeeding, because of its importance to healthy infant growth and development, and to the creation of an environment supportive of breastfeeding in the home and elsewhere. The Assembly

resolution and the draft Code have served to raise the level of awareness of Canadians. There has been a great deal of discussion within the industrial and private sectors concerning, not only the advantages of breastfeeding, but also the serious infant health problems that arise when breastmilk substitutes are misused.

I wish to reaffirm Canada's commitment to breastfeeding and our support for the position taken by the Executive Board on this issue."

MR. NILSEN (NORWAY):

"It is now clear that the health, wellbeing and in some cases survival of millions of infants in the world will be favourably affected by the protection and extension of breastfeeding. There can be no doubt that there is a need for regulation of the marketing of infant food. I therefore welcome the initiative of this Organization in formulating an International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, upon which national legislation can be moulded. I would like to underline that it is not possible in this question to apply for a "double" set of standards - one for industrialized countries, and another for the Third World. Infant nutrition has to be given special consideration when national food and nutrition policies are being planned."

DR. KARPEH (LIBERIA):

"In recent times we have been observing a marked increase in the number of cases of diarrhoea among infants due to increased artificial feeding of babies as a result of brain-washing the population through constant advertisement by the producers. It is a known fact that in most developing countries, besides the adverse effect of artificial feeding, the average family cannot afford the high cost. This is just as detrimental as providing dangerous drugs to the populace."

LE DR BARAKAMFITIYE (représentant du Conseil exécutif):

"la préparation de ce projet de Code international est le résultat de larges échanges de vues entre toutes les parties intéressées, à savoir: les gouvernements, les experts, l'industrie des aliments pour nourrissons, les organisations non-gouvernementales qui s'intéressent à ces questions et certaines organisations du système des Nations Unies, en particulier le FISE. La rédaction du Code s'est effectuée également grâce à une série de réunions, et les membres du Conseil, en examinant le Code lui-même tendant notamment à clarifier certains points. Enfin, le Conseil exécutif a unanimement approuvé ce projet de Code et le soumet à la présente Assemblée en en recommandant l'adoption. L'Assemblée de la Santé, si elle souscrit à la recommandation formulée par le Conseil, adopterait le Code international au sens de l'article 23 de la Constitution, c'est-à-dire en tant que recommandation aux Etats Membres. Dans le même texte recommandé à l'Assemblée de la Santé, le Directeur général est prié de faire rapport à la Trente-Sixième Assemblée mondiale de la Santé sur la situation en ce qui concerne l'application du Code et de formuler le cas échéant, d'après les conclusions de ce rapport de situation des propositions concernant la révision du texte du Code et les mesures nécessaires à sa bonne application."

DR. DOXIADIS (GREECE):

"It seems we had the courage to go against very strong interests with regard to this anti-smoking campaign, it is obvious that we support even more the establishment of an International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes: we shall give our full support, and we are grateful to the staff and the Director-General for having taken this initiative with UNICEF to produce this code. "

DR. ALSEN (SWEDEN):

"...the present product is the result of a painstaking effort to arrive at a compromise which is reasonable and acceptable to all. My delegation therefore intends to work in favour of the unanimous acceptance of the draft code by the World Health Assembly in accordance with the recommendation by the Executive Board. We wish at the same time to underline, however, that the present text of the code can in our opinion only be regarded as a temporary lowest common denominator, a step on the way, rather than the terminus of our efforts.

We welcome the proposal that the code should again be reviewed in the light of experience in two year's time, i.e. by the World Health Assembly in 1983, at which time we should be prepared to decide on the code's ultimate form and contents. Meanwhile, the implementation of the present code must be most carefully monitored.

We are firmly of the opinion that an international marketing code for breast-milk substitutes should first and foremost be regarded as one important part of a process by which we may gradually ameliorate the health situation of mothers and children."

DR. HIDDLESTONE (NEW ZEALAND):

"...on behalf of my delegation I wish to emphasize our position on the draft International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes. We strongly support the proposed recommendation. We believe the required review by the Director-General will be a certain stimulus to the realization of our united ambition to further the undoubted proven advantages of breastfeeding."