



**WPHNA**



***Weak Commitment to Evidence, Poor Controls on Industry Influence Could Hamper UN Bid to Curb Diseases Caused by Heavily Marketed Foods and Alcohol***

**OTTAWA/TORONTO/LONDON (September 20, 2018):** The Centre for Health Science and Law, International Baby Food Action Network, and World Public Health Nutrition Association made the following comment about an [open letter to United Nations leadership issued by 49 health groups and networks \(affiliated with more than 1,300 national organizations\) and leading experts](#) concerning a High Level Meeting to be held at the UN HQ in New York City on Thursday September 27th.

*Heads of state, health ministers, and other government leaders worldwide are wise to put their heads together to focus on better ways to prevent and control heart disease, stroke, cancer, diabetes and other illness caused largely by heavily marketed tobacco, alcohol, and food. However, progress addressing risks has been dismal. A draft political declaration reveals that world leaders still have a poor understanding of the evidence base for change, and harbour wildly excessive optimism about industry’s willingness to take action to shrink certain food and alcohol markets enough to improve customers’ health or back prevention measures that are effective enough to obviate the need for lucrative pharmaceutical treatments.*

*Without independent evidence and tough conflict of interest safeguards, the 2025 progress report could reveal 14 years of inaction since the General Assembly first began ringing the alarm bells in 2011. According to the Global Burden of Disease project, approximately 10 million deaths are caused by poor nutrition. The World Health Organization estimates that 3 million deaths are caused annually by excess alcohol consumption. UNICEF estimates that 800,000 babies die every year as a result of sub-optimal breastfeeding, and millions more worldwide suffer lifelong illnesses due to poor infant feeding practices largely resulting from marketing of baby foods.*

**The 2011 United Nations Political Declaration on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Disease marked only the second time since World War II that a UN High Level Meeting was dedicated to a health issue (the other was devoted to HIV/AIDS). For more information about the upcoming meeting and open letter, contact:**

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Contact more signatories via <http://healthscienceandlaw.ca/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/UN-NGO-contacts.pdf>