

Ms Ann Veneman  
Executive Director  
UNICEF  
USA

3 September 2005

Dear Ms Veneman

The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA), a global network of individuals and organisations concerned with the protection, promotion and support of breastfeeding worldwide, welcomed UNICEF's statement for World Breastfeeding Week 2005, affirming the work of WABA and other NGO's in support of optimal infant and young child feeding. An important part of this work involves implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes. We now understand that as of January 2006, UNICEF plans to abolish the post in the Nutrition Section responsible for providing legal assistance for Code implementation. We urge you to reconsider this decision because of its likely damaging effects on infant and young child feeding, and on the health and survival of children.

UNICEF's Mid-Term Strategic Plan includes as an area of cooperation, the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding and complementary feeding. WABA looks forward to continued fruitful collaboration with UNICEF in this area of work. A key aspect of the promotion of exclusive breastfeeding is the protection of mothers from commercial promotion of breast-milk substitutes, which undermines efforts to promote breastfeeding.

The UNICEF Headquarters' post makes a critical contribution to the legal technical assistance that is essential to help countries legislate for implementation of the Code. Without this help, the 4<sup>th</sup> Millennium Development Goal of reducing child mortality is less likely to be reached. There is no equivalent expertise elsewhere in UNICEF, nor is sufficient specialised expertise readily available from other international organisations, nor can it be quickly developed at regional level.

The WHO/UNICEF *Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding* adopted by UNICEF Executive Board in 2002 has the aim of increasing commitment of governments, international organisations and other parties for optimal feeding practices. It once again urges governments to enact and implement the International Code. Governments look to UNICEF for legal assistance to implement WHO and UNICEF recommendations.

UNICEF's legal support has contributed significantly to the implementation of the Code, 64 countries having adopted it as law, while in an additional 23, drafts await approval. However, many countries as yet have no law, or existing controls are out-dated or are not implemented or monitored. The continued work of UNICEF, jointly with WABA and IBFAN, is urgently needed. UNICEF's role in promotion of the International Code is crucial. In conclusion, we repeat the request for continuing the post which provides legal assistance for Code implementation.

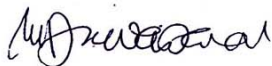


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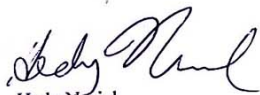
Yours sincerely,



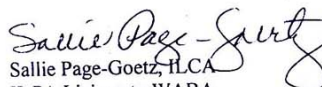
Anwar Fazal  
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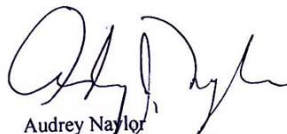
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