



**World Alliance for
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Arm-twisting in the Philippines – the world breastfeeding movement denounces interference by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce

Direct pressure is being exerted by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce on the President of the Philippines to withdraw newly introduced regulations that protect breastfeeding and infant and young child health.

The President of the US Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Thomas Donohue, warned President Arroyo of “the risk to the reputation of the Philippines as a stable and viable destination for investment” if she did not “re-examine this regulatory decision”. He was particularly concerned about the effect of the marketing restrictions on the pharmaceutical and infant formula companies.

In July 2006, the Philippines Department of Health issued new Implementing Rules and Regulations (IRR) to restrict most marketing practices used to boost infant formula sales. These regulations must be seen in the light of the 1986 “Milk Code”, a law on infant food marketing, based on the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes, Breastmilk Supplements and Related Products. The recent World Health Assembly (WHA) resolutions, endorsed by all countries including Philippines and the USA, contributed significance to the E.O. 51 (Milk Code) and the IRR.

In protest over the IRR, the Pharmaceutical and Health Care Association of the Philippines (PHAP), representing the three main US formula companies (Abbott Ross, Mead Johnson and Wyeth) and other international pharmaceutical giants, took the Philippines government to court. In July, the Supreme Court declined PHAP’s application for a temporary restraining order to stop the IRR from coming into effect.

Later, the Supreme Court, upon PHAP’s application for a review, overturned its own decision by granting a temporary restraining order in favour of PHAP. While a court case is pending, no one should comment on its merits. The letter by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce can be seen as a direct threat to the independence of the judiciary.

At their 5th meeting, the Global Breastfeeding Partners of the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) were amazed by this level of interference by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce. The Global Breastfeeding Partners, comprising worldwide experts in infant and young child feeding and health, wish to support the Department of Health, Philippines. We reaffirm that use of infant formula is indeed a potential hazard to infant and young child health and development, and promotion of such foods undermines breastfeeding, putting their health at risk.

The Global Breastfeeding Partners, therefore, call upon the business sector to exercise restraint and also call upon various arms of the Government of the Philippines – Judiciary, Executive and Legislative – to carry out their duties independently and without any fear or favour to fulfill the right of the children of the Philippines to the best attainable standard of health.

Issued jointly by the Global Breastfeeding Partners of World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) in Penang, Malaysia, on 16 September 2006.

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