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Call for Endorsement . . .

a joint statement by participating organisations of the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) & International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN)

Working Together for a Toxic-Free Future

We share a common concern: Toxic chemicals are contaminating our children

If we tested every infant born today, anywhere in the world, we would find that s/he has a body burden of toxic industrial chemicals. Dioxins, PCBs, mercury, phthalates, pesticides and other dangerous substances are being passed from parent to child as early as the prenatal period.

Tiny doses of these chemicals can have a dramatic effect on the developing child. Levels of mercury that would have no impact on an adult can harm the developing brain of a foetus. A few trillionths of a gram of dioxin and PCBs can damage the developing immune and nervous systems. DDT, PCBs, dioxins and other persistent organic pollutants not only cross the placenta, they also enter into breastmilk.

We recognise the need to promote breastfeeding while we work towards ending the contamination of our communities

The contamination of breastmilk is one symptom of the environmental contamination in our communities. Responsibility for this problem belongs to the industrial sources of contamination, not to breastfeeding women. The individual decision to breastfeed must be promoted and protected while we work collectively towards eliminating the chemicals that contaminate the food we eat, the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the products we use.

Studies have shown that breastfeeding, even in a contaminated environment, has a positive impact on the development of children as compared to those who are artificially fed. Breastfeeding supports infant growth and health as well as maternal health in ways that breastmilk substitutes cannot. Indeed, breastmilk contains substances that help the child develop a stronger immune system and other protections against environmental pollutants and pathogens.

Therefore, educational and advocacy efforts to promote a toxic-free future for our children should recognise, encourage and support collective actions aimed at promoting breastfeeding, reducing chemical contamination and developing the strongest possible pollution prevention laws.

We share a vision of a toxic-free future and generations of healthy children

In Sweden, strong governmental programmes to eliminate persistent organic pollutants like DDT, dieldrin, PCBs and dioxin have resulted in dramatic decreases in contaminants in breastmilk. In the United States, bans on lead in gasoline and smoking in public places have resulted in dramatic decreases in the levels of dangerous chemicals in the blood of young children. These public health achievements show that reductions in the production, use and disposal of toxic chemicals, along with the destruction of toxic chemical stockpiles and reservoirs, can decrease the body burden in our children and in all of us. The United Nations Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), the development of sustainable alternatives to dioxin-producing incineration, local and national efforts to restrict the use of pesticides or to phase out the uses and emissions of mercury, all deserve our energetic and sustained support.

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We pledge to work together towards the day when our infants are born toxin free, and can grow and develop in a toxic-free world.



Updated list of Endorsers, March 2004

Agenda for Environment and Responsible Development, Tanzania • Alaska Community Action on Toxics, USA • Alianza por Una Mejor Calidad de Vida, Chile • Altruistic Leadership Institute (ALI), Malaysia • Aminingshjälpen (The Swedish Nursing Mothers' Support Group) • Aquamedia, Republic of Georgia • Armenian Centre of Hygiene & Epidemiological Surveillance • Armenian Women for Health and a Healthy Environment • ARNIKA Association, Czech Republic • Arugaan, Philippines • Asociación Argentina de Medivos por el Medio Ambiente (AAMMA), Argentina • Associação de Combate aos Pops (ACPO), Brazil • Associação de Consciência à Prevenção Ocupacional, Brazil • Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative Hong Kong Association (BFHIHKA) • Bahai Faith, Malaysia, Malaysia • Bangladesh Breastfeeding Foundation (BBF) • Basel Action Network (BAN), Washington, USA • Brahma Kumaris Ipoh, Malaysia • Breastfeeding Information Bureau, Malaysia • Breastfeeding Mothers Support Group (BSMG), Singapore • Breastfeeding Network (BfN), UK • Breastfeeding Promotion Network of India (BPNI) • Breastfeeding Support Group of Thailand • California Nurses-Midwives Association, USA • Campaign for Alternative Industry Network (CAIN), Thailand • Camtas Manila, Philippines • Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE) • Cancer Action New York, USA • Chemicals Weapons Working Group, Kentucky, USA • Chintan, India • Chris Mulford, IBCLC, USA • Chomchonchai Foundation, Thailand • Collectif de lutte contre les organochlorés (Joint Action Group against POPs), Quebec, Canada • Common Ground, Kentucky, USA • Commonweal, USA • Community Against Toxics, Cheshire, UK • Consumers Association of Penang (CAP), Malaysia • Consumers International Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific (CI-ROAP) • Coordination Française pour l'Allaitement Maternel (CoFAM), France • Cynthia Pang, IBCLC, Singapore • Department of the Planet Earth, USA • Development Indian Ocean Network (DION), Mauritius • ECO-Accord, Russia • Ecosphere, Belarus • Egyptian Medical Students for Social Responsibility Students, Egypt • Environmental Health Fund, USA • For Civil Society, Kyrgyzstan • Foundation for Realization of Ideas, Belarus • Great Lakes United, New York, USA • Green Formosa Front, Taiwan • Greenpeace International • Greenpeace International Toxics Campaign, Canada • Greenpeace Southeast Asia, Thailand • GroundWork, South Africa • HealthCare Without Harm, Washington DC, USA • Help Organisation for People, Environment & Society (HOPES), India • Indigeneous Environmental Council, Alaska, USA • Information Pour l'Allaitement (IPA), France • INSAF, Malaysia • Institute for Children's Environmental Health, Washington, USA • International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN) Penang, Malaysia • International Campaign for Responsible Technology • International Lactation Consultation Association (ILCA) • International Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War, Egypt • Irish Doctors Environmental Association (IDEA) • Kentucky Environmental Foundation, USA • KL Prondos, Malaysia • La Leche League International (LLL), USA • Malaysia Hindu Sangam, Malaysia • Marcia Annandale, IBCLC, New Zealand • Movement pour les Droits et le Respect des Générations Futures (MDRGF), France • National Resource Defence Council, USA • National Toxics Network Inc., Australia • New Zealand College of Midwives (NZCOM) • Non-Incineration Citizens, Japan • Non-Stockpile Chemical Weapons Citizen Coalition, Kentucky, USA • Pesticide Action Network Asia-Pacific (PANAP) • Pesticide Action Network Central Asia (PANCA) • Pesticide Action Network Germany • Pesticide Action Network North America (PANNA) • Pesticide Action Network UK (PANUK) • Pesticide Action Network, Philippines • Peter Orris, University of Illinois, USA • Public Interest Consultants, UK • Pusat Penasihah Penjualan Ibu Malaysia (PPPIM) • Queensland Lactation College, Australia • Red de Acción en Plaguicidas y sus Alternativas de América Latina (RAP-AL), Chile • Red de Acción sobre Plaguicidas y Alternativas en México (RAPAM) • Sahabat Alam Malaysia (SAM) • Sai Baba, Malaysia • Sandra Steingraber, Teacher, Ecologist, Author of "Living Downstream" & "Having Faith", USA • Sarvodaya Women's Movement, Sri Lanka • Sharyle Patton, International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN), Co-Chair for Working Group on Community Monitoring, USA • Soka Gakkai Malaysia, Malaysia • Srishti, India • Surakshit, India • Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Pakistan • Taiping Tourist Association, Malaysia • Taiwan Watch Institute • Tchala Songolo, CADIC, Congo • Ted Greiner, International Maternal & Child Health (IMCH), Uppsala University, Sweden • Thanal Conservation Action & Information Network (TCAIN), India • Theosophical Society, Malaysia, Malaysia • The Nordic Workgroup for International Breastfeeding Issues, Sweden • Toxics Link, India • Virginia Thorley, WABA International Advisory Council member, Australia • WABA Steering Committee • Wesley Methodist Church, Taiping, Malaysia • Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF), Netherlands • Women's Environmental Network, UK • World Information Transfer, USA • Worldwide Fund for Nature/World Wildlife Fund (WWF).

We will update the endorsers list regularly. We welcome your endorsement and also request you to share it with others. This Statement with the latest list of endorsers is available at the WABA & IPEN websites. To endorse, please send your NAME, ORGANISATION and COUNTRY to the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action, WABA, PO.Box 1200, Penang 10850, Malaysia. Fax: 604-6572 655 Email: waba@streamyx.com Website: www.waba.org.my

This joint statement emerged out of the combined efforts of the participating organisations of WABA & IPEN, in addressing the issue on the contamination of breastmilk and the environment. This collaboration seeks to understand the issue from both the environmental health and justice and breastfeeding perspectives, share experiences and develop communication strategies to educate the general public, health workers, policy makers and the media. It is based on the recognition that breastfeeding promotion should take place alongside efforts to eliminate toxic chemicals from the environment. This statement went through a series of consultations via email discussions and at some key meetings.



The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA) is a global network of individuals and organisations concerned with the protection, support and promotion of breastfeeding. WABA action is based on the Innocenti Declaration, the Ten Links for Nurturing the Future and the Global Strategy for Infant & Young Child Feeding. Its core partners are International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN), La Leche League International (LLL), International Lactation Consultant Association (ILCA), Wellstart International, Academy of Breastfeeding Medicine (ABM) and LINKAGES. WABA is in consultative status with UNICEF and an NGO in Special Consultative Status with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations (ECOSOC).



The International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN) is a global network of public interest non-governmental organizations united to work for the global elimination of persistent organic pollutants on an expedited yet socially equitable basis. Website: <www.ipen.org>