

RESOLUTIONS AND DECISIONS¹

WHA43.3 Protecting promoting and supporting breast-feeding

The Forty-third World Health Assembly,

Recalling resolutions WHA33.32, WHA34.22, WHA35.26, WHA37.30, WHA39.28 and WHA41.11 on infant and young child feeding and nutrition;

Having considered the report of the Director-General, on infant and young child nutrition;¹⁽¹⁾

Reaffirming the unique biological properties of breast milk in protecting against infections, in stimulating the development of the infant's own immune system, and in limiting the development of some allergies;

Recalling the positive impact of breast-feeding on the physical and emotional health of the mother, including its important contribution to child-spacing;

Convinced of the importance of protecting breast-feeding among groups and populations where it remains the infant-feeding norm, and promoting it where it is not, through appropriate information and support, as well as recognizing the special needs of working women;

Recognizing the key role in protecting and promoting breast-feeding played by health workers, particularly nurses, midwives and those in maternal and child health/family planning programmes, and the significance of the counselling and support provided by mothers' groups;

Recognizing that, in spite of resolution WHA39.28, free or low-cost supplies of infant formula continue to be available to hospitals and maternities, with adverse consequences for breast-feeding;

Reiterating its concern over the decreasing prevalence and duration of breast-feeding in many countries;

1. THANKS the Director-General for his report;

2. URGES Member States:

(1) to protect and promote breast-feeding, as an essential component of their overall food and nutrition policies and programmes on behalf of women and children, so as to enable all infants to be exclusively breast-fed during the first four to six months of life;

(2) to promote breast-feeding, with due attention to the nutritional and emotional needs of mothers;

(3) to continue monitoring breast-feeding patterns, including traditional attitudes and

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practices in this regard;

(4) to enforce existing, or adopt new, maternity protection legislation or other suitable measures that will promote and facilitate breast-feeding among working women;

(5) to draw the attention of all who are concerned with planning and providing maternity services to the universal principles affirmed in the joint WHO/UNICEF statement²⁽²⁾ on breast-feeding and maternity services that was issued in 1989;

(6) to ensure that the principles and aim of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and the recommendations contained in resolution WHA39.28 are given full expression in national health and nutrition policy and action, in cooperation with professional associations, women's organizations, consumer and other nongovernmental groups, and the food industry;

(7) to ensure that families make the most appropriate choice with regard to infant feeding, and that the health system provides the necessary support;

3. REQUESTS the Director-General, in collaboration with UNICEF and other international and bilateral agencies concerned:

(1) to urge Member States to take effective measures to implement the recommendations included in resolution WHA39.28;

(2) to continue to review regional and global trends in breast-feeding patterns, including the relationship between breast-feeding and child-spacing;

(3) to support Member States, on request, in adopting measures to improve infant and young child nutrition, inter alia by collecting and disseminating information on relevant national action of interest to all Member States; and to mobilize technical and financial resources to this end.

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