

**Statement to the 134th Session of the WHO Executive Board  
on agenda item 5.4 Framework of engagement with non-State actors.**

Thank you, Chair, for the opportunity to address the distinguished Members of the EB on behalf of Medicus Mundi International and the People's Health Movement.

The proposed framework for engagement is highly flawed:

1. In defining 'conflict of interest', the paper treats having an opinion (referred to as 'intellectual bias' and 'fixed policy positions'), as being somehow comparable to having a commercial interest in the outcomes of policy making;
2. The paper focuses on conflict of interest but does not consider the power nor the modalities of influence that different NSAs exercise;
3. The paper fails to properly consider the different faces of private enterprise: the corporation, the industry federation, the front organisation and corporate philanthropy;
4. Finally, the paper confuses 'risk management' with 'conflict of interest'.

Conflicts between different interests and purposes are everywhere. What is at issue is the risk of perversion of WHO's mandate.

Risk is a function of power as well as purpose. The risk management strategies needed to guard against improper influence need to reflect an appreciation of the power and the modalities of influence of various NSAs as well as their different purposes and objectives.

For example, if an NGO, largely funded by the pharmaceutical industry, were to work with a Member State to generate a resolution benefiting particular corporations, should other governing body members know about such a relationship?

WHO's involvement in the International Medical Products Anti-counterfeiting Taskforce (or IMPACT) also provides a useful case study. What protocols should have been in place to ensure that the Secretariat was fully aware of the implications of its relationship with IMPACT?

This paper needs to be reworked with a stronger analysis of the modalities of improper influence so that the principles of risk management can be operationalized in ways which contain the real risks to WHO's mandate.

Thank you.

*The statement will be delivered by David Legge  
Contact for enquiries: [dlegge@phmovement.org](mailto:dlegge@phmovement.org)*