

# Newsletter

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Editorial

## Governments of EAPRO Region Commit to Improve Exclusive Breastfeeding

at the 7th East Asia and Pacific Ministerial Consultation (MINCON), Siem Reap, Cambodia

On March 25, 2005 *the Siem Reap Declaration* was signed; making it a historic milestone in the governments' endeavors to discharge their responsibility to fulfill the rights of all children in our region. The Declaration outlines challenges in addressing children's needs and promoting children's rights in three specific areas: disparity, adolescence, and in child survival, growth and development. It also outlines principles of action as well as goals and strategies for addressing these areas. Under child survival, growth and development, the declaration clearly urges governments to **promote exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months of life, continue for up to two years with appropriate introduction of complementary feeding consistent with the Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding; International Code for Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes; and Innocenti Declaration on the Protection, Promotion and Support of Breastfeeding.** In the principles of action the declaration recognized the role of partnership with civil society organisations.

Two years ago, we gave a call to governments of Asia Pacific to implement the *Global Strategy for Infant and Young Child Feeding*. It seems to have been heard, what a great moment for the children of Asia Pacific! Now is the time for ACTION.

Taking from the Global Strategy the first priority of all nations should be to implement the International Code for Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes. We need to protect all mothers and children from commercial influence and follow up on the Code would be a minimum and reasonable step in protecting them. Secondly, all governments should assess their current status of the implementation of the Global Strategy to find out the gaps and priorities for actions to be taken and finally allocate resources for these actions. These are critical actions that emerge from common understanding of the Siem Reap Declaration to which we are all committed.

Challenges, of course, are many including increasing HIV prevalence. Commercial sector exploitation will be a big challenge in the next decade -baby food companies will do whatever is possible to boost their sales through clever marketing and hard sell advertising. **We need to stop that.** The governments should partner with NGOs, IBFAN groups and those who work in public interest. The recent World Health Assembly (WHA) Resolution 58.32, on 'Infant and young child nutrition' calls upon member States to allocate funds for action plans of INFANT AND YOUNG CHILD FEEDING . It also calls for freedom from sponsorship to child health programmes by those having "conflicts of interest".

The Declaration makes a good start to generate action for child survival, growth and development; hope it has a better picture at the 8th MINCON after 2 years.



Breastfeeding Anytime Anywhere  
The First Lady of Timor Lesté Kirsty Sword Gusmao  
breastfeeding her 4 months old son Daniel

Dr. Arun Gupta  
Regional Coordinator, IBFAN Asia Pacific