



Date: May 2024

Subject: Civil Society Letter re: Conflict of interest between WHO and the Novo Nordisk Foundation

To: Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization

From: T1International and co-signing organisations

Earlier this month, The Novo Nordisk Foundation, Wellcome, and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation [announced](#) a new partnership “to support critical scientific research and development (R&D) for global health,” with each organisation committing \$100 million.

At the Global Science Summit (6 May 2024), you [congratulated](#) the Novo Foundation on its achievements, welcomed their huge donations for global health challenges, and voiced appreciation for the Novo Foundation’s financial support for the World Health Organisation (WHO).

[Novo Holdings](#) is the investment arm of the Novo Nordisk Foundation and has 77% of votes and 28% shares in Novo Nordisk. Thus, Novo Nordisk Foundation derives a major part of its resources from Novo Nordisk charging patients and governments prices for medication that are much higher than the cost of production.

As civil society organisations engaged in global health, we are deeply concerned at the endorsement of the Foundation. It represents a disconnect from ground realities in resource-poor settings, and the conflict of interest presented by WHO welcoming funding from the pharmaceutical industry.

WHO is funded through assessed and voluntary contributions from member states, and other entities. Concerningly, WHO [accepts significant funding from the pharmaceutical industry](#), including Johnson and Johnson, GlaxoSmithKline, Novartis, and others. Accepting funding from pharmaceutical manufacturers creates a routine awareness among sponsored groups that “one [doesn’t bite the hand that feeds it.](#)”

WHO has strict conflict of interest disclosures for tobacco product entities. **For WHO to live up to its [values](#) of being trusted to serve public health, it is vital that WHO rejects any funding directly or indirectly from the pharmaceutical industry, as would be the case for donations from the [tobacco](#) and [formula milk industry](#).** WHO should be pushing the pharmaceutical industry to lower prices and create sustainable solutions, not praising the companies.

The Novo Nordisk Foundation charitable donations masks that the funding is derived from profiteering from exorbitant pricing of medications. Its philanthropic funding diverts attention from much needed actions such as price control, increasing suppliers, and pricing transparency for essential medicines. This is dangerous for people reliant on Novo Nordisk’s drugs all across the world. **We implore WHO to become more transparent and accountable to the global community that the entity exists to serve.**

Sincerely,

T1International



Co-Signing Organisations:

1. Access to Medicines Ireland, Ireland
2. Beta Cell Action, United States
3. Center for Health Promotion, Uganda
4. Centro de Pensamiento “Medicamentos, Información y Poder”, Universidad Nacional de Colombia
5. Democracy Collaborative, United States
6. Diabet Centro, Guatemala
7. Diabète et Méchant, France
8. Diabetes & Limb Salvage Foundation, Nigeria
9. The Diabetes Centre Islamabad, Pakistan
10. Diabetes Consciousness for Community, Tanzania
11. Diabetes Control and Care Center, Afghanistan
12. Diabetes Fighters' Trust, India
13. DiAthlete, United Kingdom
14. Generation Patient, United States
15. Global Health Justice Partnership, United States
16. Good Health Community Programmes, Kenya
17. Health Care Voices, United States
18. Health GAP (Global Access Project), United States
19. Initiative for Medicines, Access & Knowledge (I-MAK), United States
20. International Treatment Preparedness Coalition, South Africa
21. Just Treatment, United Kingdom
22. Knowledge Ecology International, United States
23. Meethi Zindagi, Pakistan
24. Northern Frontier Medical Association, Kenya
25. Oxfam International
26. PharmedOut at Georgetown University Medical Center, United States
27. PrEP4All, United States
28. Project Insulin, United States
29. Rays of Hope Support Initiative, Nigeria
30. Right Care Alliance, United States
31. SA Diabetes Advocacy, South Africa
32. Salud y Farmacos, United States
33. Sweet Life Diabetes Community, South Africa
34. Talabi Diabetes Center, Nigeria
35. Uganda NCD Alliance, Uganda
36. We Care Sierra Leone, Sierra Leone