



International Union of Nutritional Sciences (IUNS)

IUNS Private Sector Engagement Policy

Introduction

The purpose of this document is to provide rules for cooperation of IUNS with external actors particularly the private sector, to serve as a guideline for interaction, including sponsoring, of the IUNS with commercial sector actors, with the intention above all of being open and clear about potential conflicts of interest, and ensuring that these aspects are adequately managed.

IUNS recognize the Private Sector, as important actors among those engaged in food and nutrition related activities; the need for sponsoring of various scientific meetings is also recognized. IUNS is basing its sponsoring policy on internationally accepted principles and rules, such as the ones used by UN organisations¹, [World Economic Forum](#), [governments](#) and others.

Any IUNS engagement with the private sector should fulfil its objectives: To promote advancement in nutrition science, research and development through international cooperation at the global level; and to encourage communication and collaboration among nutrition scientists as well as to disseminate information in nutritional sciences through modern com-

munication technology (see also [IUNS homepage](#) where the objectives are spelled out). All this in pursuing the vision widely shared with countries, the UN, regional organisations, and other professional organisations, of a world free of malnutrition (over- and undernutrition), including by the private sector where that is relevant and otherwise possible. All agreements spelled out in MoU's or similar documents must be in accordance with the policy for collaboration and sponsoring spelled out in this document.

Private sector engagement in IUNS presents both opportunities and risks. IUNS recognizes this and will seek to minimise the potential risks of any private sector engagement, such as:

- greater corporate influence over IUNS conferences, nutrition research², academic training and public nutrition work, particularly as related to using such influences for the purpose to gaining ever increasing market shares;
- loss of legitimacy with key constituencies and funders due to negative perceived co-optation by commercial interests;

- greater corporate influence over public policy making processes of higher training and research, of governmental and intergovernmental institutions, at the expense of the public good, such as services for improving nutritional health;
- the opportunity costs of distraction from or less interest in activities which are not of interest to the private sector but which may be important for nutrition goals and activities;
- regarding private sector engagements as ends in themselves, thereby undermining strategic direction and long term strategies;
- funding driven shifts in priorities at both international and national level, with fragmentation of public health/nutrition research, higher education, food and nutrition policies and programming.

Many of the constituent members of the IUNS have their own private sector engagement policies and guidelines that lead their own private sector interactions. This policy only relates to actions and activities that are

¹ See one example in the Bulletin of the World Health Organization. vol.79 no.8, Geneva 2001.

² There are reports on business influences on nutrition research in specific ways that don't foster credibility of evidence provided by the projects

sponsored by, carried out under the umbrella of, and/or in the name of the IUNS.

Defining Sponsorships

The “private sector” is recognized by IUNS to be “for-profit” enterprises or companies, whether large or small, privately owned, employee owned, state owned or stock-market listed, and legally registered.

Business interests organised as NGOs also comprise the ‘private sector’. These are organizations that are funded to service ‘for-profit’ enterprises or advocate their interests, and include research foundations, trade associations and charitable foundations that can be but not necessarily are separate legal entities with an “arms-length” relationship to the “for-profit” enterprise or enterprises that provide(s) their funding. Such organizations may or may not be registered as not-for-profit, with or without charitable status, may or may not express an explicit public purpose.

Private organisations and business that do not meet the minimum acceptability criteria for engagement such as human rights, labour rights, environment and good/democratic governance as defined by the UN are off limits on all accounts and therefore excluded from all of the further considerations regarding private organisations and business for the purpose of this policy.

Purpose of Sponsorships

The purposes of engagement of the IUNS with private organisations and business (hereafter called the *Private Sector*) can be divided into two main

categories: either seeking to receive their support and resources, and/or seeking to influence their activities. These two categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The purpose of engagements with private organisations and business by the IUNS could therefore potentially include the following:

- to consider new sources of funding of the IUNS conferences and for IUNS initiated activities between the scheduled 4-year conferences;
- to harness the skills, experiences, resources and networks of the Private Sector, especially for issues like communication and marketing;
- to increase Private Sector understanding of realise that any type of support for the work of IUNS and its constituencies would have clear rules and regulations; that includes MoU and similar specification of understanding and other types of agreements;
- to respond to the growing industrialization and commercialization of food and drink supply globally, with considerable impact on the nutrition situation;
- to utilize and shape the growing interest of corporations in voluntary responsible practices;
- to explore new sustainable approaches in order to prevent any damages of the Private Sector against public policies

and programmes.

IUNS’s engagement with the Private Sector should focus on fulfilling the purpose of nutrition research, higher nutrition education, public nutrition (including both health and agriculture) programming and activities, in order to prevent nutrition related health damages and promote the consumption of nutritionally adequate diets, where possible to maximize the Private Sector’s potential to contribute to these efforts. Such initiatives should recognize the food and nutrition priorities of IUNS and related organisations/associations, including various action plans for improved nutrition, diet, and physical activity, and related national and international policies and strategies that can help promote good nutrition.

IUNS recognizes UN conventions and associated documents as the substantive and authoritative definition of ‘adequate food’ specified in relation to nutrition for adequate human growth and development, and the rights and responsibilities of various actors to achieve these, including the Private Sector. These international instruments are particularly relevant to companies with international operations³.

IUNS’ vision for the Private Sector interaction is a future where local, national, and international companies both recognize and actively support the human right to adequate food and other relevant human rights treaties (such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against

³ The International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes and subsequent relevant World Health Assembly resolutions provides an excellent example of the sort of legislation that states should adopt, and practices that companies should adhere to, in order for nations to achieve optimal breastfeeding practices and the adequate growth and development of infants.

Women (CEDAW)). This is particularly relevant to all companies due to the broader economic influences on both the level of malnutrition and in certain parts of the world also to hunger. Those aspects of the human right to adequate food that address sustainable development and food/drink quality issues are particularly relevant to IUNS.

Principles of Sponsorships

Collaborative engagement with the Private Sector, beyond mere commercial transactions such as buying products and services, arrange symposiums, seminars, satellite meetings, conferences and workshops, is guided by the following principles:

1. *Relevance*: Any collaborative activities with the Private Sector must have a direct relevance to and be in support of achieving IUNS' objectives. IUNS shall establish and pursue its own agenda for Private Sector engagement, rather than only react to proposals.

2. *Effectiveness and efficiency*: Securing concrete outcomes in line with achieving the goals of the IUNS, as well as the appropriate use of the IUNS' resources as compared to alternative actions.

3. *Managing conflict of interests and independence*: Identification of interests of collaborating individuals and institutions, assessment of potential conflicts of interest, in keeping with IUNS' policy on such conflicts and subsequent management of these or exclusion from participation. For the credibility of IUNS it is important to show independence from commercial or other interests that may not be in line with IUNS rules and regulations.

4. *Sharing email lists*: IUNS should not share emails of any constituency or participants of conferences with the Private Sector, unless such permission is granted in writing. Such sharing should be reported by the President in the minutes of the General Assembly meetings and in reports by the President.

5. *Transparency*: While respecting individual privacy and institutional confidentiality, as appropriate, the aim must be for all interested persons to easily obtain information on the activities, including through posting on websites. Transparency is essential for an organisation like IUNS, particular towards its member constituency.

6. *Diversity*: Diversifying types of the Private Sector, to ensure that no one type dominates engagements.

7. *Differential Safeguards*: Distinguishing between activities that relate to public policy making (including higher nutrition training and nutrition related research) and other activities with less relevance to or influence on public policy. Differentiating between the Private Sector involved in activities that are confluent⁴ with the interests of IUNS and those that are not. This includes abstaining from promising or distributing gifts in order to ensure participation in activities related to IUNS conferences or meetings between such conferences.

8. *Human rights based*: promoting and respecting human rights principles, treaties and covenants/conventions.

9. *Good/Democratic Governance*: Respecting and using the principles of Good/Democratic Governance as de-

finied by the UN in running the IUNS as an organisation, including sponsoring, collaboration or other types of engagement with the Private Sector.

Types of Sponsorships

The types of engagement with the Private Sector by the IUNS can be categorized into three broad areas, namely *direct funding, contributions in kind including access to resources and organisational skills, and dialogues*.

a. *Direct funding* support by the Private Sector of the IUNS involves the provision of funds directly to the IUNS. Such funding would complement the funds provided by IUNS membership fees and other constituents for carrying out the work of IUNS.

Direct funding of any type of work in-between the conferences organised by and in the name of IUNS by the Private Sector should be for activities included in a work plan approved by the General Assembly of IUNS. Such activities could include performing studies or reviews of literature to determine either knowledge or practice gaps for example, and/or for realizing symposia and/or workshops to discuss such findings and make recommendations to IUNS. Direct funding of such activities should be provided through and facilitated by the President, in full openness and transparency, and reported to the General Assembly and in information channels used by IUNS.

b. *Contributions in kind* in the form of goods includes travel costs (air fares and hotel bills), hosting working related satellite meeting, breakfast, lunches, symposiums in the pro-

⁴ Confluent here means not only to be 'not antagonistic' to IUNS goals and principles, but to have mutually supportive interests.

gramme of conferences, or dinner meetings, or providing papers or other consumables. Such support is easy to place a cash value on. *Contributions in kind* in the form of services or access to resources includes provision of space for holding events, assistance with the printing of reports, and access to information networks, to communication networks, to data bases, to software, and advisory services. Such support is more difficult to put a cash value on.

c. Dialogues. Interactions such as exchanging information and/or trying to influence practices are likely to involve food related Private Sector. Such dialogues could be of relevance to understanding the gaps in implementation of knowledge in a particular field such as food fortification, including the use of different signs intended to influence consumers when buying products. Another potential area for dialogue concerns business practices and whether these are meeting the human rights obligations of the food related Private Sector in particular, including the issue of voluntary codes of conduct versus mandatory codes of conduct.

Management of Sponsorships

The President⁵ of the IUNS is charged with the responsibility to implement this Private Sector Engagement Policy. Each type of engagement with the Private Sector, and especially the food related Private Sector, has dif-

ferent sorts of risks for the IUNS and consequently has different sorts of management requirements.

The Private Sector engagement policy is presented by President to the plenary of the IUNS and approved. Any applicants for hosting a IUNS conference should state that their application and policy would be in line with general ethical rules and with the IUNS Private Sector Engagement Policy.

Direct funding and in kind contributions for the IUNS programme with the Private Sector must be in line with principles of human rights, labour rights, and environment and good/democratic governance criteria. Direct funding of the IUNS work has to be managed in accordance with financial rules and regulations.

The President of the IUNS, in developing any fund raising proposals for the IUNS programme of work, will take this Private Sector Engagement Policy into consideration, and any proposal will require approval of the IUNS Council before seeking such funding. If urgencies arise approval could be achieved by internet communications, either through e-mails or by conference calls.

In order to protect IUNS against conflict of interest, affiliates of the IUNS that are actively involved in the work programme of the IUNS should all sign a specific form of conflict of interest. All members of possible type

of work in-between the conferences organised by and in the name of IUNS, or in preparing and during the IUNS conferences, should sign the conflict of interest form. These conflict of interest forms will be kept by the IUNS Secretariat and provided to those who demand to see them on request.

The Secretariat of the IUNS will periodically review the way in which the IUNS is engaged with the Private Sector and decide and inform the IUNS on how the engagement was maintained or modified.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

The President of the IUNS will maintain the records all of the conflict of interest forms, of all IUNS regular reports, and they shall be available for public inspection on request.

The President of the IUNS will provide information concerning interactions of the IUNS with the Private Sector, in its regular reports, which will be published on the website of the IUNS.

In order to ensure it maintains and utilize its unique competencies and resources, the IUNS will periodically review and revise as appropriate its rationale and strategy for Private Sector engagement. The next review is proposed for 2013.

⁵ When the President is mentioned in this document it means the selected president plus the secretariat and/or the Council of IUNS.

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