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**Dr. Manmohan Singh,
Hon'ble Prime Minister of India,
8 Race Course Road,
New Delhi – 110 001**

Global Dump Soft Drinks Campaign in India

Rates of overweight and obesity, including childhood obesity, are rapidly rising throughout the world, leading to increased risk of heart disease, diabetes, and other diet-related illnesses. Consumption of sugary beverages have been clearly implicated in this disturbing trend,¹ but multinational giants like Coca-Cola and PepsiCo continue flooding the market with products that are nothing more than “liquid candy,” often promoted by aggressive marketing campaigns viewed by children.

We urge the government to help combat this problem by taking the following actions. Soft drink companies should be required to:

- 1. Cease all marketing of sugar-laden beverages to children under 16, including print and broadcast advertising, product placement, the Internet, mobile phones, athletic event sponsorship, signage, packaging promotions, merchandising, and other means.**
- 2. Stop selling sweetened beverages, including sports drinks and fruit flavored beverages and teas, in all public and private elementary, middle, and high schools; acceptable beverages in schools include water, seltzer (carbonated) water, and fruit juice in container sizes of 250 ml or less. (Ideally, schools should have free, convenient drinking fountains.)**

¹ See Ludwig, DS, Peterson, KE, and Gortmaker, SL. Relation Between Consumption of Sugar-Sweetened Drinks and Childhood Obesity: a Prospective, Observational Analysis. *Lancet*. 2001; 357: 505-508; James, J, Thomas, P, Cavan, D, and Kerr, D. Preventing Childhood Obesity by Reducing Consumption of Carbonated Drinks: Cluster Randomised Controlled Trial. *British Medical Journal*. April 2004; Vol. 328; Malik, V, Schulze, MB, and Hu, FB. Intake of Sugar-Sweetened Beverages and Weight Gain: A Systematic Review. *American Journal of Clinical Nutrition*. 2006; 84: 274-288; Ebbeling, CB, Feldman, HA, Osganian, SK, Chomitz, VR, Ellenbogen, SJ, Ludwig, DS. Effects of Decreasing Sugar-Sweetened Beverage Consumption on Body Weight in Adolescents: A Randomized, Controlled Pilot Study. *Pediatrics*. 2006; 117: 673-680; Popkin, B. and S.J. Nielson. The Sweetening of the World's Diet. *Obesity Research*. 2003: Vol. 11, No. 11.

3. **Limit sponsorships promoting physical activity and health to contributions to “blind” trusts overseen by government agencies which use such funds for programs that do not feature corporate logos, brands, or other proprietary information.**
4. **Increase the promotion of new lower-sugar products and sell existing high sugar products in smaller portions.**
5. **Investigate the impact of a small Value Added Tax on soft drinks -- with the government returning the money to consumers through provision of physical activity and nutrition education programs, and through subsidies that reduce the costs of fruits and vegetables. Soft drink taxes are already in place in portions of the United States.**

These steps are consistent with recommendations provided by the World Health Organization’s Global Strategy on Diet, Physical Activity, and Health and are necessary to facilitate healthful dietary choices by consumers, especially children.

We wish to thank you for your attention to this matter.

Yours sincerely,

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**Cc: Mr. Anbumani Ramadoss, Hon’ble Minister for Health & Family Welfare,
Govt. of India, Nirman Bhawan, New Delhi – 110 011**

**Cc: Mr. Sharad Pawar, Hon’ble Minister for Consumer Affairs, Food & Public
Distribution, Government of India, Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi – 110 001**