

PRESS RELEASE

**For Release on
24th December 2007
(Embargo till 23rd December 2007)**

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Groups Round-the-World Urge Governments to Limit Soft Drink Marketing

Dozens of consumer organizations around the world are calling on governments and health officials to help curb marketing of soft drinks and other high calorie beverages linked to the world-wide childhood obesity crisis.

The Global Dump Soft Drinks Campaign, aimed at transnational giants Coca-Cola and PepsiCo, is calling on government officials to require the companies 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.)
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.

The Campaign is also urging governments to investigate the possible use of fiscal measures, such as a small Value Added Tax on soft drinks, which would be returned to consumers through provision of physical activity and nutrition education programs, and through subsidies that reduce the costs of fruits and vegetables. Soft drinks are already taxed in certain parts of the United States.

“Multinational giants like Coca-Cola and PepsiCo are flooding the world with beverages that are nothing more than ‘liquid candy.’ As a result, consumers, including children, in all corners of the globe are increasingly developing obesity, ‘adult onset’ diabetes, and other health problems,” said Mr. Bejon Misra, a member of the campaign.

We hope that consumers here can avoid the types of problems that high rates of soft drink consumption have led to in countries, like India.

Some countries now suffer a “double burden” of childhood obesity and malnutrition according to the World Health Organization.

More information about the campaign can be found on the internet at www.dumpsoda.org.

The Global Campaign in India is being launched on the occasion of the National Consumer Day on 24th December 2007 at 11.00 AM at Lecture Hall, India International Centre Annexe, Max Mueller Marg, New Delhi – 110 003 and also the letter to the Hon’ble Prime Minister of India on this issue will be released on that occasion.