

March 2018

Dear government members of the ILO Governing Body:

We, the undersigned organizations, write to express our support for the International Labour Organisation (ILO) instituting the strongest possible policies to prohibit cooperation and public-private partnerships with the tobacco industry at the upcoming 332nd session of the Governing Body.

Taking this decision would be in line with the recommendations of ILO's document *GB.332/POL/5*¹, "An integrated ILO strategy to address decent work deficits in the tobacco sector," developed by the Director-General, which recommends that the ILO's current partnership with the tobacco industry be allowed to expire and be replaced by funds from the "Regular Budget Supplementary Account and regular budget technical cooperation to continue working in tobacco-growing areas in Brazil, Malawi, United Republic of Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia." This would both broaden the ILO's work to address decent work deficits in the tobacco sector, which as the document notes, go beyond just child labour, and bring the ILO in line with other UN agencies that have instituted policies against cooperation and public-private partnerships with the tobacco industry.

In February of last year, the International Labour Office released a detailed report on the ILO's cooperation with the tobacco industry in the pursuit of the Organization's social mandate. The report and document *GB.332/POL/5* note a long-running trend in which tobacco companies are shifting production to lower-income countries where workers are less organized. A recent report from the World Health Organization documented that "recent trends in the organization of the tobacco leaf production and marketing chain...has expanded these multinational corporations' control over price and other factors while making farmers increasingly dependent."² Multiple reports have documented that abusive contracting arrangements in countries including Malawi³, Bangladesh⁴, and other countries⁵ lock tobacco farmers and their families in generational cycles of poverty and indebtedness. Paired with well-documented price fixing by major tobacco multinationals⁶, a picture emerges of a deliberately planned and well-orchestrated strategy by a US\$700-billion industry to boost its profits off decreasing leaf prices at the expense of farmers and governments in Global South countries.

The tobacco industry has invested more than US\$15 million in the ILO to support "charitable partnerships" aimed at reducing child labour in tobacco fields. Such projects have a nominal impact on child labour, primarily because the projects focus on the cycle of poverty of tobacco farmers and neglect

¹ http://www.ilo.org/gb/GBSessions/GB332/pol/WCMS_618444/lang--en/index.htm

² <https://www.cnbc.com/2017/01/10/why-getting-farmers-to-switch-from-tobacco-crops-is-a-struggle.html>

³ <http://www.laborrights.org/publications/tobacco-production-and-tenancy-labour-malawi>

⁴ http://www.who.int/tobacco/framework/cop/events/2007/bangladesh_study.pdf

⁵ <http://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1152&context=jhclp>

⁶ <http://www.economist.com/node/687703>

to address tobacco industry practices such as the administration of unfair contracts, collusion over leaf prices, and inflation of the costs for farm inputs that perpetuate poverty in the first place. To the contrary, internal documents of the tobacco industry have revealed that these projects are actually intended to provide cover for egregious tobacco industry abuse by being carried out jointly with a respectable organization like the ILO.⁷ Such projects come at significantly less cost to the industry than paying fair prices for tobacco leaf that would provide sustainable livelihoods for farmers and allow them to pull their children out of hazardous labour. In fact, the tobacco industry has derived nearly twenty times more in economic benefit from unpaid child labor in Malawi alone than it spent on all its social programming.⁸

ILO projects conducted jointly with the tobacco industry also inappropriately prioritize some of the ILO fundamental rights at work, namely prohibition on child labor, above others. The International Union of Food, Agricultural, Hotel, Restaurant, Catering, Tobacco and Allied Workers' Associations (IUF) passed at its latest congress at the end of August a declaration noting the many ways in which global tobacco companies deny workers their rights to freedom of association and collective bargaining.⁹ Farmer and farm-worker organizations that could collectively negotiate better leaf prices and working conditions would significantly reduce child labor, as well as other labor exploitation, in tobacco supply chains, but tobacco funding diverts attention into approaches that—while not bad in and of themselves—address symptoms of child labor without addressing root problems. These include increased monitoring and remediation, which may push the cost and risks of combatting child labor onto impoverished farmers, and savings and loan or crop diversification programs that may help individual farmers improve their financial situation, but do not change the economic model that perpetuates exploitation of tobacco farmers.

Collaboration with the tobacco industry also undermines the ILO's obligations as a UN entity. Article 5.3 of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) makes clear that the tobacco industry's interests are inherently in conflict with those of public health and, therefore, the industry cannot participate in setting or implementing public health policy. This is the backbone of the FCTC, without which implementation of the treaty cannot succeed.

The ILO's partnerships with the tobacco industry not only undermine the obligations of the 181 Parties that have ratified the treaty, but also contravene the expectation that the ILO is in policy coherence with the FCTC as a UN treaty. There is evidence that the tobacco industry has exploited the ILO to advance its objectives within the UN more broadly. For example, an internal document from British American Tobacco said, *"The ILO has a unique role as a UN organisation in bringing together representatives of governments, workers and employers. It thus provides official access to an UN body in a way that is not available from other UN bodies."*¹⁰

⁷ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2564665/>

⁸ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2564665/>

⁹ http://www.iuf.org/w/sites/default/files/resolutionsforwebsite_0.pdf (p.34)

¹⁰ <https://www.industrydocumentslibrary.ucsf.edu/tobacco/docs/#id=xsh10204>

The ILO risks tarnishing its reputation and the effectiveness of its work if it chooses to continue these partnerships with the tobacco industry. Such relationships contravene the WHO FCTC and enable the tobacco industry to tout its relationship with a reputable institution while continuing to undermine public health policymaking, exploit farmers, and obstruct farm workers' right to collective bargaining. We hope you will stand with us against public-private partnerships with the tobacco industry at the 332nd session of the Governing Body, and vote to institute the necessary policies to prohibit collaboration with the industry in line with the recommendations of document *GB.332/POL/5*. Should you have any questions or wish to discuss further, please contact Mischa Terzyk at terzykm@fctc.org.

Sincerely, the below-signed individuals and organizations:

ACT Health Promotion
Action on Smoking and Health
Action on Smoking and Health (UK)
Ad hoc Tobacco Free Committee of the Japanese Society of Oral Health
Advocacy for Principled Action in Government
Aer Pur Romania
African Tobacco Control Alliance - ATCA
Airspace Action on Smoking and Health
Alliance contre le tabac / French Alliance against Tobacco
Alliantie Nederland Rookvrij (Dutch Alliance for a Smokefree Society)
Andhra Pradesh State Youth Helath Action Groups
ASH Finland
ASH Northern Ireland
ASH Scotland
Asha Parivar
Association for Community Development
Association of Directors of Public Health
Association PROI
Australian Council on Smoking and Health (ACOSH)
Austrian Council on Smoking and Health
Bangladesh Anti Tobacco Alliance (BATA)
Belau Cares, Inc.
Belgian Foundation Against Cancer
Brazilian Thorax Association - SBPT
Breathe 2025
Butabika National Mental Hospital
Cambodia Movement for Health
Cameroon Coalition for Tobacco Control
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids (Bangladesh)
Cancer Focus Northern Ireland
Catalan Institute of Oncology/WHO Collaborating Center for Tobacco Control

CEE-HOPE Nigeria
Center for Health Services Research, Department of Hygiene, Epidemiology & Medical Statistics,
Medical School, National & Kapodistrian University of Athens
Centre for the Critical Inquiry into Society and Culture, Aston University
CIET Uruguay/The Tobacco Epidemic Research Center
City Health Center
CNS (Citizen News Service)
COLAT
Comisión Nacional Permanente de Lucha Antitabáquica
Comité Nacional para la Prevención del Tabaquismo (CNPT)
Comité National Contre le Tabagisme
Comité/Club Unesco Universitaire pour la Lutte Contre la Drogue et les autres Pandémies(CLUCOD)
Confederation of Consumer Societies (KONFOP)
Consortium of Ethiopian NCD Associations
Consumer VOICE (Voluntary Organization in Interest of Consumer Education)
ContraPESO
Corporate Accountability International
Council for Public Health and the Problems of Demography
Cuerpo Académico en Salud Materno Infantil. Universidad de Guadalajara
Danish Cancer Society
Dhaka Ahsania Mission
DNF (Droits des Non-Fumeurs)
ENSP - European Network for Smoking and Tobacco Prevention
Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria
Ethiopian Diabetes Association
European Heart Network
European Respiratory Society (ERS)
FIC
Focus NGO
Fonds des Affections Respiratoires asbl
Forum Rauchfrei
Foundation "Smart Health - Health in 3D"
Framework Convention Alliance for Tobacco Control
French National Committee for Tobacco Control
Fundación Interamericana del Corazón México
German Smokefree Alliance
HealthJustice Philippines
[HRIDAY \(Health Related Information Dissemination Amongst Youth\)](#)
Human Development, Reproductive Health & Right's NGO Network of Mongolia
Human Rights and Tobacco Control Network
Institute for Legislative Affairs
Institute for Youth Participation, Health and Sustainable Development
International Institute for Legislative Affairs

International Labor Rights Forum
International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease
INWAT Europe Foundation
IOGT International
Irish Cancer Society
Irish Heart Foundation
Italian Heart Foundation – Fondazione Italiana Per Il Cuore
Jamaica Coalition for Tobacco Control
Japan Cancer Society
Japan Society for the Tobacco Control
Jeewaka Foundation
Kyiv City Health Center
Lina and Green Hands Society
Lithuanian National Tobacco and Alcohol Control Coalition
Mathiwos Wondu-YeEthiopia Cancer Society
Ministry of Health Uganda
MPS GABON
National Association of Consumers
National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol
National coalition "For Smokefree Kazakstan"
National Heart Foundation and Research Institute
National law School of India University, Bengaluru, India
New Initiative for Social Development (NISD)
New Vois Association of the Philippines
NGO Advocacy Center "Life"
Nigerian Heart Foundation
Norwegian Cancer Society
Nucleus of Research and Tobacco Treatment - UFRJ
Observatorio Ecuatoriano sobre el Control del Tabaco
OxySuisse
Paris Sans Tabac
PAS Center
People's Health Foundation
Physicians for Social Responsibility, Finland
Pratyasha anti-drug's club
PROGGA-Knowledge for Progress
Psychologists against tobacco, Sweden
Public Health Protection Foundation
Public Services International
RAID -THE GAMBIA
Roy Castle Lung Cancer Foundation
Royal Society for Public Health
Salud Crítica

Samoa Cancer Society

SEATCA

Slovenian Coalition for Public Health, Environment and Tobacco Control

Smart Ungdom

Smoke Free Partnership

Smoke-free Life Coalition

Socialist Party (India)

Society for Alternative Media and Research (SAMAR)

SOS Tabagisme-Niger

Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance

Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance (SEATCA)

Tabinaj (Alliance of Women against Tobacco)

Tanzania Tobacco Control Forum

TC Consult

Teachers against Tobacco Sweden

The Heart Foundation of Jamaica

The Network for Consumer Protection in Pakistan

Tobacco - Free Association of Zambia

Tobacco Committee - Brazilian Medical Association

Tobacco control alliance in Georgia

Tobacco Control Collaborating Centre of the UK

Tobacco-free Finland

Tobaksfakta - oberoende tankesmedja (Tobacco facts - independent think tank, Sweden)

UBINIG (Policy Research for Development Alternative)

Uganda Cancer Society

Uganda Health Communication Alliance

Uganda National Health Users'/Consumers' Organization

UK Centre for Tobacco and Alcohol Studies

UK Health Forum

Unfairtobacco

Unión Antitabáquica Argentina UATA

Vaagdhara

Vinoba Sewa Ashram

Vision for Alternative Development

Vital Strategies

Voluntary Health Association of India

Vote For Health campaign

Work for a Better Bangladesh Trust

World Association for Psychosocial Rehabilitation Philippine Chapter

Youth Network No Excuse Slovenia

YPSA

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Bruce Zhang, University Of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
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