

16 October 2017

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 331st session of the Governing Body.

In February of this 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. In this report, the Office lays out two options for the Governing Body to consider. One option would end the ILO's partnerships with the tobacco industry and advance a conflict of interest policy while the other would allow business as usual to continue.

That same report notes 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."<sup>1</sup> Multiple reports have documented that abusive contracting arrangements in countries including Malawi<sup>2</sup>, Bangladesh<sup>3</sup>, and other countries<sup>4</sup> lock tobacco farmers and their families in generational cycles of poverty and indebtedness. Paired with well-documented price fixing by major tobacco multinationals<sup>5</sup>, 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 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.<sup>6</sup> 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

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.cnn.com/2017/01/10/why-getting-farmers-to-switch-from-tobacco-crops-is-a-struggle.html>

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.laborrights.org/publications/tobacco-production-and-tenancy-labour-malawi>

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.who.int/tobacco/framework/cop/events/2007/bangladesh\\_study.pdf](http://www.who.int/tobacco/framework/cop/events/2007/bangladesh_study.pdf)

<sup>4</sup> <http://digitalcommons.law.umaryland.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1152&context=jhclp>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.economist.com/node/687703>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2564665/>

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.<sup>7</sup>

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.<sup>8</sup> 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 180 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."*<sup>9</sup>

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 331<sup>st</sup> session of the Governing Body, and vote to institute the necessary policies to prohibit collaboration with

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

<sup>8</sup> [http://www.iuf.org/w/sites/default/files/resolutionsforwebsite\\_0.pdf](http://www.iuf.org/w/sites/default/files/resolutionsforwebsite_0.pdf) (p.34)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.industrydocumentslibrary.ucsf.edu/tobacco/docs/#id=xshl0204>

the industry. Should you have any questions or wish to discuss further, please contact Mischa Terzyk at [terzykm@fctc.org](mailto: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  
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)  
NGO Advocacy Center "Life"  
Nigerian Heart Foundation  
Norwegian Cancer Society  
Nucleus of Research and Tobacco Treatment - UFRJ  
Observatorio Ecuatoriano sobre el Control del Tabaco  
OxyRomandie  
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  
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

## **Individuals**

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Aminul Islam, National Tobacco Control Cell (NTCC)  
Andrew Russell, Durham University  
Anjali Sahajpal, Ics  
Anne Buttigieg, Smoking Cessation Specialist  
Benjamin Meier, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
Bruce Zhang, University Of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
Bryan Stoten, WarwickshireCounty Council  
Byambaa Chultemsuren, Global fund supported project on AIDS and TB

Gaurav Gupta, Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids  
Hemal Shroff, Tata Institute of Social Sciences  
Hugo Córdova, COLAT - Perú  
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Marco Ugarte, COLAT  
Marine Perraudin, World Health Organization  
Marleen Kestens, European Heart Network  
Marty Otañez, University of Colorado Denver  
Meri Koivusalo, National Institute for Health and Welfare  
Roberto Mazza, Istituto Nazionale Tumori Italia  
Ronald Labonte, University of Ottawa  
Samalie Namitala, Uganda revenue authority  
Savannah Loehr, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill  
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Takahiro Tabuchi, Osaka International Cancer Institute  
Tih Ntiabang, Framework Convention Alliance