



10 September 2019

Delegates of the
UNITED NATIONS
GENERAL ASSEMBLY

To: Permanent Representatives of Member and Observer States of the United Nations General Assembly

Re: World Leaders Should Reject Engagement with the Tobacco Industry at the United Nations General Assembly's 74th session

Excellencies,

Ahead of the 74th regular session of the United Nations General Assembly we write, on behalf of public health groups and individuals, to call on your delegation to decline invitations from the tobacco industry or those furthering its interests, and to reject tobacco industry partnerships.

We were alarmed that, in July, a then-sitting UN official directly advocated to the Secretary-General in favor of tobacco partnerships in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. This egregious approach from *within* the UN defied the UNGA's long-standing tenet of a fundamental conflict of interest between the tobacco industry and public health. It also signals a renewed effort by the tobacco industry to infiltrate the UNGA and steer global policy to its advantage.

The threat is both real, and present. Every year, the tobacco industry's products claim 8 million lives and cause losses worth at least \$1.4 trillion, leaving behind a devastating trail of social, economic, environmental and health harms. Partnership with the tobacco industry, therefore, directly contradicts the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and constitutes a major reversal of the progress achieved towards the attainment of SDG 3 (Healthy Lives). This goal involves strengthening implementation of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), a treaty that requires governments to protect public health from the commercial and vested interests of the tobacco industry (Article 5.3). Yet tobacco companies use SDG logos in their reports,ⁱ sponsor UNGA side eventsⁱⁱ, and launch global initiativesⁱⁱⁱ to divert attention from divert attention from the deaths, harms and losses that they have yet to be accountable for^{iv}.

These actions are not benevolent. Tobacco industry documents reveal that access to the UN is part of a deliberate strategy to establish credibility, to gain access to policy makers for the purposes of undermining tobacco control and to open up new markets for its products.^v Association with the UN (including its agencies and events) lends legitimacy to tobacco companies, which, in turn, enhances their ability to sell lethal products, and market in ways that attract children.^{vi} The UNGA must avoid being complicit in the tobacco industry's plans.

It is in this context that **we call on you to reject invitations from tobacco companies or those furthering their interests;^{vii} and to counter proposals that support tobacco industry partnerships and positions.**

We also urge you to remind all entities in the UN system to adhere to [the model policy](#) for preventing tobacco industry interference, through the rejection of funds from, and partnerships with, the tobacco industry. Global progress has already been made in excluding the tobacco industry at the United Nations Development Programme, the UN Global Compact and the World Health Organization.

Rejecting tobacco industry proposals and funding within the UNGA and across all UN agencies would accelerate achievement of the SDGs, promoting wellbeing for all at all ages.

Sincerely,



Sandra Mullin
Senior Vice President, Vital Strategies and
Partner in **STOP (Stopping Tobacco Organizations and Products)**

STOP (Stopping Tobacco Organizations and Products) is a global tobacco industry watchdog whose mission is to expose the tobacco industry strategies and tactics that undermine public health. STOP is funded by Bloomberg Philanthropies and is a partnership between The Global Centre for Good Governance in Tobacco Control, The Tobacco Control Research Group at the University of Bath, The Union's Department of Tobacco Control, and Vital Strategies.



ⁱ British American Tobacco (BAT) and Philip Morris International (PMI). See sustainability reports of BAT and PMI at [https://www.bat.com/group/sites/UK__9D9KCY.nsf/vwPagesWebLive/DOAWWEKR/\\$file/Sustainability_Report_2018.pdf](https://www.bat.com/group/sites/UK__9D9KCY.nsf/vwPagesWebLive/DOAWWEKR/$file/Sustainability_Report_2018.pdf) and https://www.pmi.com/resources/docs/default-source/sustainability-reports-and-publications/pmi-sustainability-report-2018-high-res-may-2019.pdf?sfvrsn=43ef95b5_4_, respectively

ⁱⁱ e.g. PMI-sponsored Concordia Summit. CEO of PMI also spoke at the Concordia 2018 summit. See <https://twitter.com/concordiasummit/status/1044286774003081218> and <https://www.concordia.net/community/andre-calantzopoulos/>

ⁱⁱⁱ e.g. PMI-funded Foundation for Smoke Free World

^{iv} United Nations Development Programme. Discussion Paper: The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control: An Accelerator for Sustainable Development. May 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/librarypage/hiv-aids/the-who-framework-convention-on-tobacco-control-an-accelerator-.html> (accessed 22 August 2019). World Health Organization. Tobacco and Poverty: A Vicious Circle. 2004. Retrieved from https://www.who.int/tobacco/communications/events/wntd/2004/en/wntd2004_brochure_en.pdf?ua=1 (accessed 22 August 2019). World Bank. *Curbing the epidemic - governments and the economics of tobacco control* (English). *Development in practice*. Washington DC ; World Bank, 1999.

^v WHO. *Tobacco industry interference with tobacco control*. Geneva, Switzerland: WHO Press, 2008. Available at <https://www.who.int/tobacco/publications/industry/interference/en/> (accessed 22 August 2019). Bialous S & Corporate Accountability International, *Article 5.3 and International Tobacco Industry Interference: Report commissioned by the Convention Secretariat*. WHO FCTC, 2008. Available at https://ggtc.world/dmdocuments/11.%20WHO_ARTICLE%205.3%20and%20international%20TII_2015.pdf (accessed 22 August 2019). WHO FCTC. *UN agencies and tobacco industry interference: Examples of good practice from UN agencies*. 2015. Available from <https://untobaccocontrol.org/impdb/wp-content/uploads/resources/UN%20agencies%20and%20tobacco%20industry%20interference.pdf> (accessed 22 August 2019).

^{vi} Bosely S, Collins D, Lamb K, Dhillon A. Tobacco: A deadly business. How children around the world are exposed to cigarette advertising. *The Guardian*. 2018 March 09. Available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/mar/09/how-children-around-the-world-are-exposed-to-cigarette-advertising> (accessed 22 August 2019).

^{vii} As the tobacco industry loses its credibility it increasingly uses third parties in its attempt to access governments. Governments must therefore question the veracity of organizations approaching them. We wish to draw your attention to a front group, the Foundation for a Smoke-free World which is currently particularly active. See Tobacco Tactics. *Foundation for a Smoke-Free World*. 28 August 2019. Retrieved from: https://tobaccotactics.org/index.php?title=Foundation_for_a_Smoke-Free_World



Signatories list

Organization	Name	Title	Country
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Action on Smoking and Health (ASH)	Laurent Huber	Executive Director	USA
Action on Smoking and Health Foundation	Prakit Vathesatogkit, M.D.	Executive Secretary	Thailand
Advocacy Center "LIFE"	Lilia Olefir	Executive Director	Ukraine
Alcohol and Drug Information Centre	Pubudu Sumanasekara	Executive Director	Sri Lanka
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Center for Media in Educating Community	Mai Phan Loi	Chairman of the Scientific Council	Vietnam



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STOPPING TOBACCO
ORGANIZATIONS & PRODUCTS

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