INTRODUCTION

Over the past two years, governments across the globe have faced an increasingly aggressive tobacco industry (TI) that exploited policy gaps and loopholes to interfere in tobacco control. The TI dissuaded, enticed, frustrated or simply overwhelmed governments in their efforts to protect public health.

The TI has increased its meddling across countries, and many governments did not sufficiently resist TI interference or fulfill their mandate to strengthen and advance tobacco control. State Parties to the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) are obligated to protect their health policies by using Article 5.3 and its implementing guidelines, which empowers them to protect public health policies from commercial and other vested interests.

The Global Tobacco Industry Interference Index (the Index) surveyed 100 countries and found that many countries' parliamentarians, heads of state and ministers did not fulfill their duties to protect the human right to health under Article 5.3. The TI persuaded them to challenge and delay tobacco control measures, file pro-industry bills or promote the TI instead of supporting evidence-based life-saving measures to reduce all forms of tobacco use.

The TI targeted, lured and lobbied especially non-health sectors partly due to the lack of awareness among this sector on the importance of limiting industry interactions to only when strictly necessary for regulation. The absence of transparency in interactions with the industry and failure to reject TI contributions exacerbated this interference and undermined efforts to protect public health, implement the WHO FCTC and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Index is a civil society review of how governments are implementing WHO FCTC Article 5.3. The 2025 Index shows worsening interference, as more scores deteriorated than improved. Almost half of the countries (46) demonstrated a deterioration in their scores for failing to exclude the TI from the policymaking table, interacting with the TI in a non-transparent manner, accepting TI donations, collaborating with the TI on corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities and providing benefits to the industry. However, over a third of the countries (34) improved by applying greater transparency, rejecting collaborations with the industry and adopting procedures for interaction with the industry.

> "The findings of this year's Index are a stark reminder that the tobacco industry continues to interfere with health policies worldwide, exploiting gaps in governance and transparency. Governments must act decisively to protect public health by fully implementing Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC, ensuring transparency in all interactions, and rejecting industry influence in any form. Only by doing so can we safeguard progress and prevent industry tactics from undermining evidence-based tobacco control measures."
>
> Vinayak Prasad,
> World Health Organization

KEY FINDINGS

18 countries made progress in either adopting new measures or implementing existing sector-wide guidance on Article 5.3. **Peru** is the latest country to incorporate Article 5.3 into its national tobacco control legislation, bringing the total to nine countries, while the others have a code, guidance, directive or circular to protect health policies from industry interference.

More than 20 countries have banned TI donations. Countries have banned TI donations to political campaigns or have applied restrictions. **Botswana**, **Bulgaria**, **Canada**, **Ethiopia**, **France**, **Israel**, **Lebanon**, **Nigeria**, **Ukraine**, **Uruguay** and **Venezuela** have prohibited political donations.

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32 countries have banned TI-related corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities, and five did not accept its contributions. The industry targeted non-health agencies with its charity, latched on to government priorities and appealed to willing ministers and parliamentarians.

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46 countries resisted the tobacco industry's narrative on harm reduction and have banned e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products, effectively denormalizing the TI. Court cases were filed in **Panama** and **Mexico** to revoke the ban. Efforts to ban flavors in tobacco and nicotine products were undermined in **Belgium**, **Finland** and **Israel**.

Parliamentarians in 14 countries supported and promoted the TI. Parliamentarians filed multiple pro-industry bills, accepted industry input that resulted in delayed adoption of laws or that attempted to defeat tobacco control laws, or promoted legislation to benefit the TI.

At least 10 governments delayed or did not increase tax. **Argentina**, **Bangladesh**, **Bulgaria**, **Georgia**, **Israel**, **Lebanon**, **Poland**, **Sweden**, **Tunisia** and **Ukraine** gave in to industry push-back on tax increases. However, three governments successfully used tax increases as a tobacco control measure by withstanding industry pressure opposing this.

At least 20 governments collaborated with the TI. Governments collaborated through memorandums of understanding (MOUs), training sessions and enforcement activities to tackle smuggling. 17 of these governments are non-Parties to the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products.

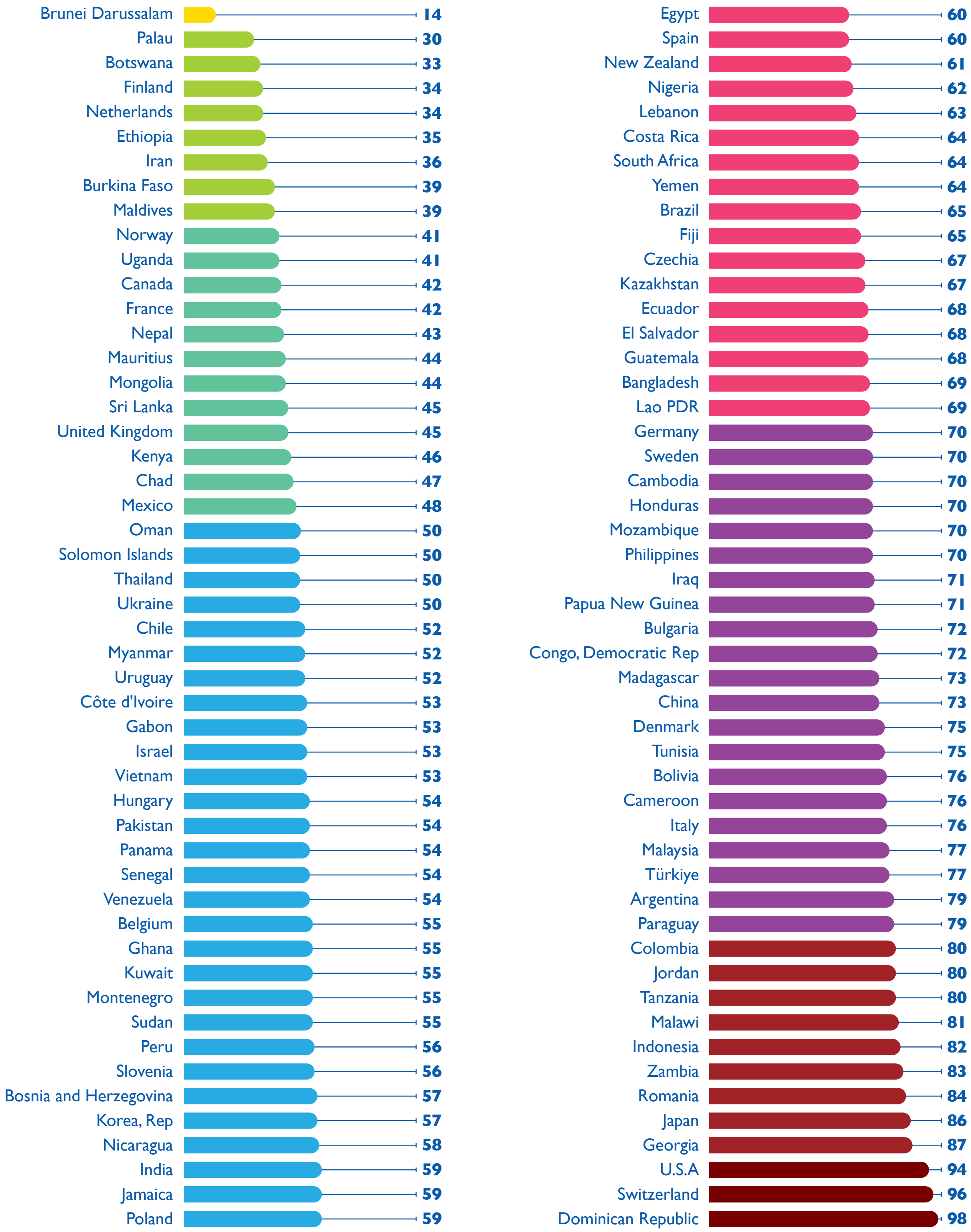
Members of parliament, ministers and governors accepted sponsored study visits to tobacco company facilities. Philip Morris International (PMI)'s facility in Switzerland was the most common facility visited by high-level public officials.

Six governments allowed their diplomatic missions to endorse the TI. The **Japanese** Embassy in at least seven countries (**Bolivia**, **Cambodia**, **Egypt**, **Indonesia**, **Lebanon**, **Nicaragua** and **Tanzania**) was lobbied by Japan Tobacco International (JTI) to promote its business.

Most countries do not have a register of TI lobbyists. Most also do not have a register of entities linked to the industry, nor rules of disclosure for meetings with the TI. **14 countries** have a lobbyist register.

Article 5.3 was scarcely publicized among government departments. While some governments claim to raise awareness, there is sparse publicly available information on countries' efforts to raise awareness of Article 5.3 within government departments.

FIGURE 1: TOBACCO INDUSTRY INTERFERENCE OVERALL COUNTRY RANKING



RECOMMENDATIONS

When governments act as a whole to limit interactions with the industry to only when strictly necessary and are transparent about their interactions, they are able to curb interference and protect public health. The experiences of countries who successfully implemented good governance measures serve as best practice for others.

1. The whole government must act cohesively to curb TI interference. The government must act as a whole and cohesively to stop TI interference and implement Article 5.3 as shown in the exemplary actions taken by 18 countries.

2. Adopt legislation or a directive or code on Article 5.3 to apply to all public officials. This should include parliamentarians, heads of state and ministers.

3. Require greater transparency for increased accountability. Transparency when dealing with the TI will reduce instances of interference and will help hold government officials and the industry accountable. All interactions with the TI must be recorded and made publicly available. Require the TI to disclose information such as its expenditures on marketing and lobbying activities.

4. Prohibit contributions from the TI, including to political campaigns. When governments accept contributions from the TI, they make themselves vulnerable, as illustrated by countries that compromised on tobacco control or reversed legislative measures.

5. Require the tobacco industry to pay a levy for environmental damage. Reject all industry-led cleanup campaigns and reforestation activities. Exclude the TI from standard Extended Producer Responsibility schemes.

6. Stop giving incentives to the tobacco industry. The TI should not be granted preferential treatment, incentives, exemptions or any form of benefit to run its businesses, which conflict directly with tobacco control policy.

7. Reject all collaboration and partnership with the TI. Governments are often put at a disadvantage when they collaborate, partner with or agree to cooperate with the TI through non-binding agreements. There should be no collaboration between governments and the TI.

8. Denormalize the TI. The TI is unique and unlike any other industry; its core business is incompatible with human rights and undermines multiple SDGs. Ban all tobacco-related CSR activities. Reject all study visits to industry facilities.

Citation: Assunta M. Global Tobacco Industry Interference Index 2025. Global Center for Good Governance in Tobacco Control (GGTC). Bangkok, Thailand. Nov. 2025. **www.globaltobaccoindex.org** | **www.exposetobacco.org**