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## **International organizations condemn alleged policy interference by tobacco industry, express support for smoking ban of MMDA**

02 September 2011. Manila, Philippines -- International tobacco control organizations are expressing indignation over the numerous links consistently surfacing between tobacco industry and the case filed against the smoking ban of Metro Manila Development Authority. In a TV interview last month, complainant Antony Clemente confessed that he was paid by a tobacco company to take MMDA to court but retracted his statement through his lawyer hours after the airing of the news program. As well, the tobacco farmers who allegedly sponsored the bond for the temporary restraining order were found to be linked with tobacco company Philip Morris.

“Paying petitioners to file restraints against public health regulations is a deliberate abuse of the legal system. These actions demonstrate the lengths that Philip Morris International and other tobacco corporations will go to in order to continue to export death and disease to every corner of the globe,” says Campaign Director Gigi Kellett of Corporate Accountability International.

Corporate Accountability International wages campaigns against corporate abuse. Its campaign, Challenging Big Tobacco, organizes actions that expose and challenge attempts of the tobacco industry to interfere in the implementation of public health treaty World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC).

In 2005, the Philippines became a party to WHO FCTC as a response to the alarming global epidemic of tobacco. To date, representatives of the tobacco industry have filed 8 different cases opposing the authority of the government to implement various provisions of said global treaty.

According to Kellett, tobacco corporations like Philip Morris International (PMI) employ a range of tactics, commonly including “intimidation by litigation” or interference with the judicial process, to restrain countries from implementing strong tobacco control measures as part of their obligation to WHO FCTC.

Framework Convention Alliance also expressed its ire through Director Laurent Huber.

“The court order on the smoking ban is definitely disappointing. Links between the tobacco industry and the side of the complainants – not to mention an admission of the complainant himself, are all easily visible. We strongly urge the Philippine government to be vigilant against this manipulation by the tobacco industry, which echoes its tactics worldwide. For example, PMI has launched a case against Uruguay for its ground-breaking tobacco control measures as an attempt to block the country's efforts to protect the health of its citizens.”

Framework Convention Alliance consists of over 350 organizations in more than 100 countries working on the development, ratification, and implementation of WHO FCTC.

In a statement by South East Asia Tobacco Control Alliance (SEATCA), Director Bungon Ritthiphakdee commended the efforts of MMDA Chair Francis Tolentino for standing his

ground on the smoking ban despite repeated attempts of tobacco giants to derail enforcement of the no-smoking policy.

“MMDA Chairman Francis Tolentino deserves public and national government support for his bold initiatives to protect the health of Metro Manila residents from tobacco smoke. He has that support from SEATCA, and all its partners throughout Southeast Asia,” relays Ritthiphakdee. “He should stand fast and confident in the knowledge that political will and irrefutable science can and will overcome even the most underhanded tactics by the tobacco industry.”

World Health Organization estimates that one Filipino dies a tobacco-related death every 6 minutes, making it an urgent public health crisis. Seven out of the ten primary causes of death in the country - stroke, cancer, heart attacks, tuberculosis, chronic lower respiratory disease, pneumonia, and diseases that occur around childbirth - are all tobacco-related diseases.