

24 October 2017

Secretary General Antonio Guterres
United Nations, S-233
New York, NY 10027

Dear Secretary General Guterres,

RE: Cooperation between the tobacco industry and the International Labour Organization (ILO)

I am writing to you about a matter currently in front of the ILO Governing Body, which will meet next from 26 October to 9 November 2017 for its 331st meeting. The proposal GB.331/POL/5 concerns the ILO's ongoing cooperation with the tobacco industry and acceptance of tobacco industry funding through its partnership with Japan Tobacco International (JTI) and the Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco Growing Foundation (ECLT). This practice stands in direct conflict with international standards, in particular Article 5.3 of the World Health Organisation UN Framework Convention for Tobacco Control (FCTC).

At the upcoming meeting, the ILO Governing Body will be asked to endorse continued cooperation between the ILO and the tobacco industry, disregarding the recommendations of the UN Interagency Taskforce (UNIATF) on Non-Communicable diseases, which ILO is a member of. As you well know, ECOSOC resolution E/2017/L.21 calls upon all members of the UNIATF to adopt a model policy for preventing tobacco industry interference as well. At this point, it seems unlikely that ILO will respect this call. I therefore want to kindly urge you to take action and remind the President and members of the ILO of the UN's policy to prevent tobacco industry interference at all its levels of activity.

While eliminating child labour is, of course, an issue of utmost importance and goal that must be pursued, accepting money from an industry that continues to use its market power to create the very conditions that it claims to fight, makes ILO complicit in rehabilitating the practices of the world's most deadly industry. The establishment of the safeguards proposed in GB.331/POL/5 to protect ILO from tobacco industry interference, will have no effect as the mere acceptance of 'tobacco money' provides the industry with undue legitimacy that it is seeking.

In addition, there is little evidence to suggest that industry-funded initiatives have created any positive change in this area. JTI and other tobacco companies continue to profit from paying low prices for tobacco produced through child labour. JTI is still boosting profits in many more countries that use child labour to produce tobacco. Reports have repeatedly claimed that ECLT's work aims to keep farmers dependent on aid from the tobacco industry to avoid them abandoning the sector. Cooperation with the tobacco industry undermines progress on economic development, global health and social justice, core targets of ILO's mandate and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

I thus appeal to you today, to not allow the tobacco industry to keep using UN agencies such as ILO to promote its corporate image and to insist on ending the cooperation with both the industry and its funded organisation (ECLT) during the 331st as recommended by ECOSOC and UNIATF.

Please find attached a call signed by more than 180 international non-governmental organisations from the health, development and labour sectors. We rely on your support in this urgent matter.

Sincerely,



Francis Thompson
Framework Convention Alliance, Executive Director