



Ugandan delegation breaches the National Tobacco Control law and its international obligation under the WHO FCTC at the ongoing International Labour Organization session of the governing body.

Dear Government of Uganda,

We the undersigned organisations from the Tobacco control forum would like to bring the following to your urgent attention.

The WHO FCTC in recognition that tobacco industry interference poses the single greatest threat to tobacco control efforts world-wide included Article 5.3 which reads: *"In setting and implementing their public health policies with respect to tobacco control, Parties shall act to protect these policies from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry in accordance with national law."*

Uganda signed the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, (WHO FCTC) in 2005, and ratifying it on 20th June, 2007. As party to the convention; we have an obligation to implement all its provisions without reservations.

The domestication process of this convention started as early as 2008, however it was slowed by various counter strategies from the tobacco industry including lobbying policy makes, self-regulation, litigation threats, Corporate Social Responsibility, misrepresentation of the FCTC spirit, exaggeration of their economic contribution to Uganda among others.

Because tobacco industry interference was the single greatest threat to our national tobacco control efforts and in fulfilment of our treaty obligations under the WHO FCTC, the Government of Uganda devised measures to embed the letter and spirit of Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC in its National legislation and policy process and finally on 28th July 2015, the Parliament of Uganda passed a comprehensive, WHO FCTC compliant Tobacco Control law with a whole Part (viii) in favour of Article 5.3.

It's therefore against this background that we write to you.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) is the only organ of the UN that still has ties with the tobacco Industry and tomorrow it has an opportunity to stand on the right side of history and protect workers over corporate profits.”

The ILO will finally decide whether it, too, will sever ties with the Tobacco Industry. The decision set to come at its ongoing governing body meeting this month, could shutter one of the tobacco industry's last-remaining avenues of influence to the United Nations.

This decision comes as a global call by public health and labour leaders around the globe who delivered a letter to government representatives of the ILO Governing Body calling on them to end the ILO's public-private partnerships with the tobacco industry because of its devastating health, socioeconomic and environmental effects to the global community.

Global public health leaders from the Secretariat of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) and global tobacco control organizations have long called for the ILO to shut its doors to the Tobacco Industry.

There is great prevalence of child labour in many countries in the tobacco-growing areas including Uganda which exposes children to many hazards, notably long working hours, heat exhaustion, respiratory orders, injuries, accidents, poisoning and health problems from being exposed to pesticides, musculoskeletal injuries, and green tobacco sickness, which is caused by nicotine absorbed through the skin from contact with wet tobacco leaves which is a threat to public health.

In the past 15 years, the ILO has received more than \$15 million USD from tobacco corporations for joint programs, including more than \$10 million from Japan Tobacco International for its Achieving Reduction of Child Labour in Supporting of Education (ARISE) program. The industry promotes these programs to boost its public relations, but they do little to curb child labour in tobacco fields because they do not shift the

tobacco industry-driven cycle of poverty for tobacco farmers that forces children into the fields.

During this ongoing 332nd session of the Governing Body, the ILO will decide whether to follow the recommendation of the UN Interagency Task Force on NCDs and the Economic and Social Council resolution urging members of the task force to adopt internal policies that protect against conflicts of interest with the tobacco industry.

The government of Uganda as a state party to the ILO and a member of ILO's governing board, is currently attending the session of the Governing Body and at the session that started last week, the government of Uganda supposedly on behalf of the African region, vehemently opposed this proposal.

This position is however contrary to Uganda's policy by virtue of its being party to the WHO FCTC with specific reference to Article 5.3 and part viii of the Uganda Tobacco Control Act that prohibits government partnerships with the Tobacco Industry, any corporate social responsibility from the tobacco Industry and therefore Uganda's current position at the ILO amounts to conflict of interest which is a breach of our own law.

Recommendations

1. The Government of Uganda should support the ILO office position to sever ties with the tobacco Industry.
2. The Government of Uganda should instruct to the Ugandan delegation to immediately retract their statement because it is in breach of government obligations under the WHO FCTC (Article 5.3) and our national Tobacco Control Law.
3. All government agencies should seek guidance from the Ministry responsible for Health as a lead agency on matters relating to tobacco and any government relations with the tobacco Industry in line with the Tobacco Control Act.

Ministry of Health Republic of Uganda
Center for Tobacco Control in Africa
Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids
Uganda Health Communications Alliance
Uganda National Health Consumers' Organisation
Center for Health, Human Rights and Development

CC Ministry of Foreign affairs
CC Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
CC Parliament of Uganda
CC Ministry of Health