

MINISTRY OF HEALTH (MOH) LETTERHEAD

DATE

RECIPIENTS

All medical schools and research institutions
All attached agencies of MOH
All partner agencies of MOH

RE: Tobacco industry-funded research and “Foundation for a Smoke-Free World”

The (Country Name) has been a Party to the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) since 200_ : A proof of our commitment to address the tobacco epidemic, which has claimed millions of lives in the country due to smoking-related diseases.ⁱ Notably, the (Country) government has made progress in implementing the (cite Tobacco Control Laws), and takes the lead in the (region/world) in implementing (name of policy where it has been taking the lead). Part of our collective success in achieving such life-saving measures is the effort to protect these policies against tobacco industry interference, a general obligation under [Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC](#). This treaty obligation can only be realized if public offices and officials would avoid interactions with the tobacco industry unless strictly necessary for the latter’s effective regulation, reject contributions, partnerships, and funds from the tobacco industry, and raise awareness about the tobacco industry’s strategies to undermine public health.

In view of this, it is incumbent on this office to alert you/ your office of tobacco industry strategies that could interfere with public health policy. A well-known tobacco multinational company, Philip Morris International (PMI), whose brands exist in our market, has established a seemingly innocuous philanthropy, Foundation for a Smoke-Free World (FSFW),ⁱⁱ that funds studies pertaining to agriculture, labor, economics, electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), including e-cigarettes and a device PMI aggressively markets (IQOS).ⁱⁱⁱ

In spite of FSFW’s protestations that it is “independent,”^{iv} notwithstanding full funding from PMI, the WHO has issued a [statement](#) urging all FCTC Parties, organizations, and individuals not to partner with FSFW because of its sponsor’s “known history of funding research to advance its own vested interest.”^v Moreover, the FCTC Secretariat regards FSFW as “a clear attempt to breach the WHO FCTC by interfering in public policy...aimed at damaging the treaty’s implementation, particularly through the Foundation’s contentious research programmes.”^{vi}

As to ENDS, based on scientific findings, the [WHO does not recommend such devices as a public health tool due to clear health risks related to their use, the risk of recreational use among the youth and second-hand exposure to their various toxicants](#).^{vii} (From the standpoint of a developing country with an immensely young population, the risk of ENDS leading to recreational smoking and becoming a gateway to youth smoking is dangerously high.)

In view of the above, please be informed that this Office, in accordance with Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC, will not consider or give credence to FSFW or tobacco industry-backed study, especially those intended to affect public health policy.

We look forward to your active vigilance in ensuring that studies conducted by your institution do not receive tobacco industry funding from the said FSFW or similarly situated organizations. Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

[MOH official]

For questions: Contact the **Global Center for Good Governance in Tobacco Control (GGTC)** at ggtc@ggtc.world

ⁱ Every year, smoking kills more than ____ (number) ____ citizens, and costs our economy between ____ (amount) ____ billion in terms of health expenses and productivity losses.

ⁱⁱ In September 2017, PMI pledged a \$1 billion grant to FSFW, an organization that will provide grants for “*medical, agricultural, and scientific research to end smoking and its health effects and to address the impact of reduced worldwide demand for tobacco.*” FSFW’s patron, PMI, is one of the biggest transnational tobacco companies manufacturing and selling the world famous Marlboro brand and is currently introducing into the market ENDS, including e-cigarettes and IQOS (heat not burn) product. The FSFW’s research grants will include research into the new products of PMI. Despite swimming in tobacco money, the FSFW describes itself as “*an independent, private foundation formed and operated free from the control or influence of any third party.*” Furthermore, FSFW has been reported to be working with public relations firms and law firms linked to the tobacco industry. – Yach, Derek (19 March 2018). The state of smoking 2018: Global survey findings and insights. Foundation for a Smoke-Free World. Press Conference Presentation. Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20180517030708/https://www.smokefreeworld.org/sites/default/files/uploads/derek-yach-press-conference-presentation.pdf> (accessed on 09 August 2018).

ⁱⁱⁱ Yach, Derek (19 March 2018). The state of smoking 2018: Global survey findings and insights. Foundation for a Smoke-Free World. Press Conference Presentation. Retrieved from <https://www.smokefreeworld.org/sites/default/files/uploads/derek-yach-press-conference-presentation.pdf> (accessed on 09 August 2018).

^{iv} Yach, *supra* note 3.

^v Excerpt of WHO statement: “*When it comes to the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World, there are a number of clear conflicts of interest involved with a tobacco company funding a purported health foundation, particularly if it promotes sale of tobacco and other products found in that company’s brand portfolio. WHO will not partner with the Foundation. Governments should not partner with the Foundation and the public health community should follow this lead.*” – WHO (28 September 2017). WHO statement on Philip Morris funded Foundation for a Smoke-Free World. Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/news-room/detail/28-09-2017-who-statement-on-philip-morris-funded-foundation-for-a-smoke-free-world> (accessed on 16 August 2018).

^{vi} Excerpt of FCTC Secretariat’s statement: “*The Convention Secretariat regards this tobacco industry-funded initiative as a clear attempt to breach the WHO FCTC by interfering in public policy. It is a deeply alarming development aimed at damaging the treaty’s implementation, particularly through the Foundation’s contentious research programmes.*” – WHO FCTC (19 September 2017). WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Secretariat’s statement on the launch of the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World. Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/fctc/mediacentre/press-release/secretariat-statement-launch-foundation-for-a-smoke-free-world/en/> (accessed on 16 August 2018).

^{vii} See WHO Report to COP7 on Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS) http://www.who.int/fctc/cop/cop7/FCTC_COP_7_11_EN.pdf