

Tobacco industry-funded Foundation fits in a long-established and sinister pattern of corporate chicanery

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The Article 5.3 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) obliges Parties to act to protect public health policies from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry in accordance with national law.



The guidelines for implementation of Article 5.3 state clearly that governments should limit interactions with the tobacco industry and avoid partnership. These Guidelines are also explicit that Governments should not accept financial or other contributions from the tobacco industry or those working to further its interests, such as this Foundation.

Strengthening implementation of the WHO FCTC for all tobacco products remains the most effective approach to tobacco control. Policies such as tobacco taxes, graphic warning labels, comprehensive bans on advertising, promotion and sponsorship, and offering help to quit tobacco use have been proven to reduce demand for tobacco products. These policies focus not just on helping existing users to quit, but on preventing initiation.

The World Health Organization and other public health organizations and leaders around the world have publicly spoken out against Philip Morris International and its new Foundation for a Smoke-Free World, which the tobacco giant claims will support “independent” research. They are urging governments, the public health community, researchers, and others to reject the foundation.

Here are excerpts from statements by the WHO and other public health organizations and leaders:

World Health Organization

"The UN General Assembly has recognized a "fundamental conflict of interest between the tobacco industry and public health." WHO Member States have stated that "WHO does not engage with the tobacco industry or non-State actors that work to further the interests of the tobacco industry", the Organization will therefore not engage with this new Foundation.

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promotion and sponsorship, and offering help to quit tobacco use have been proven to reduce demand for tobacco products. These policies focus not just on helping existing users to quit, but on preventing initiation.

If PMI were truly committed to a smoke-free world, the company would support these policies. Instead, PMI opposes them. PMI engages in large scale lobbying and prolonged and expensive litigation against evidence-based tobacco control policies such as those found in the WHO FCTC.

WHO will not partner with the Foundation? Governments should not partner with the Foundation and the public health community should follow this lead."

WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Secretariat

"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.

There is extensive evidence of tobacco-industry funded research that was later used to prevent effective tobacco control policies. It is clear that the industry aims to follow the same path in the area of non-traditional tobacco products, which are unregulated in many countries."

American Cancer Society

"This attempt by Philip Morris International to paint itself as a public health partner is manipulative and dangerous. It is a new twist out of the tobacco industry's deadly playbook, but nobody should be fooled. It is a continuation of a decades-long effort to paint over tobacco's role in spreading death and misery around the globe."

American Cancer Society policy prohibits partnering with any research or public health effort that takes tobacco industry support. It is unethical to take money earned off the top cause of preventable deaths in the world.

If Philip Morris International is serious about ending the epidemic of smoking-caused illness, it has the power to do it: Stop selling cigarettes. Stop spending billions to market cigarettes. Stop suing governments around the world. And stop fighting every meaningful, evidence-based tobacco control effort."

Action on Smoking & Health

"The tobacco industry has a long history of working to undermine and subvert scientific research. In 1954, tobacco companies formed the Tobacco Industry Research Committee, allegedly to fund independent research on smoking and lung cancer. Internal industry documents have now shown that the true purpose of this was to spread doubt and convince the public that dangers of smoking were not proven."

Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids

"Philip Morris has a long history of deceiving the public and doing whatever it takes to sell cigarettes. This is not the first time Philip Morris has announced that it is funding "independent" research, not is it the first time it has claimed to support "independent" researchers. Each of its past efforts have been nothing more than a smokescreen to divert attention from its marketing practices, the harm its products cause and the strong scientific consensus that already existed - both about the harm of its products and the scientifically proven ways to reduce tobacco use. There is no reason to believe that this announcement is any different.

Philip Morris' claimed commitment to a "smoke-free world" cannot be taken seriously so long as it continues to aggressively market cigarettes and fight proven policies to reduce smoking and save lives around the world. Until Philip Morris ceases these harmful activities, its claims should be seen as yet another public relations stunt aimed at repairing the company's image and not a serious effort to reduce the death and disease caused by its products."

Framework Convention Alliance (FCA)

"FCA notes that there is a long and tragic history of tobacco companies funding questionable research to delay effective measures to reduce deaths from smoking. Aware of their lack of credibility on health, Philip Morris and other tobacco companies also have a long track record of paying third parties to advance their arguments and providing funds for what they describe as independent research efforts.

It is because of this history that the countries of the world, in the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), made a binding legal commitment to protect their policy-making process from tobacco industry interference. Accordingly, the FCA recommends that no government, organization or researcher accept money from, endorse or enter into partnership with the PMI funded Foundation."

International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union)

"This is a one billion dollar bribe to secure Philip Morris a seat at the table with public health policymakers globally. There is a fundamental conflict of interest between the goals of the tobacco industry and the goals of promoting public health."

World Heart Federation

"Despite funding a foundation that claims its goals is "ultimately eliminating smoking worldwide," Philip Morris International (PMI) continues to invest billions of dollars in marketing cigarettes worldwide focusing many of these efforts in low-income and middle-income countries to gain new customers.

The best way to tackle the smoking epidemic and achieve a smoke-free world is by implementing policies set out in the WHO-FCTC not by engaging with an industry whose disingenuousness shows it cannot be trusted with people's health. "

Simon Chapman, Emeritus Professor, School of Public Health, University of Sydney, Australia

"If Philip Morris really wanted smoking to decline, it could announce tomorrow that it will voluntarily introduce large graphic health warnings and plain packaging on all its tobacco products. Knowing the impact of price on sales, it could massively increase its wholesale price of retailers. It could stop all its tobacco advertising and sales promotions.

But Philip Morris and other tobacco companies have done nothing voluntary to embrace any policy that would accelerate the decline in smoking. The tobacco industry has armies of lobbyists whose goals are to defeat, dilute and delay any policy or initiative that threatens its cash cow."

Stanton Glantz, Professor of Medicine and Director of the Centre for Tobacco Control Research and Education at the University of California, Francisco

"If PMI was serious about achieving a smoke free world, it could stop aggressively lobbying against proper implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control or stop selling Marlboros and other cigarettes."

Vera Luiza da Costa e Silva - Head of the WHO-FCTC Secretariat

"The establishment of the Foundation ties into a broader PMI strategy to ensure that there is little or no regulation on new tobacco products PMI is introducing. It also fits into the tobacco industry's corporate social responsibility schemes. Such projects are designed to mislead or confuse public opinion. They are the anti-truth.

How do we know? Reams of research and legal documents on tobacco industry behavior confirm that the Foundation's public statements fit seamlessly into the tobacco industry's strategy, which is to sell new products while continuing to sell cigarettes. Over decades, tobacco industry dollars have funded influence buying, covert activities and scientific misrepresentation. Industry money has never advanced the cause of public health, as is made clear in excruciating detail by the millions of tobacco industry documents.

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corporate chicanery."

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