



PRESS RELEASE

Tobacco Industry attempt to interfere with the 7th session of the Conference of Parties to the WHO FCTC

November 10, Kampala, UGANDA - The Tobacco Control Act, 2015 forbids tobacco industry interference in tobacco control efforts. . It was reported (The Daily Monitor November 4, 2016) that the Tobacco Industry had lobbied some Government Officials to nominate delegates who would represent the industry interests at the Seventh Session of the Conference of Parties (COP7) currently taking place (7th to 12th November 2016) in India. This is contrary to the overall objective of the Tobacco Control Act 2015, as well as the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC). Lobbying Government officials is one of the documented strategies/tactics that the Tobacco industry uses to subvert, undermine and derail tobacco control efforts (WHO: 2009).

The Conference of the Parties (COP) is the governing body of the WHO FCTC and is comprised of all Parties to the Convention. It keeps under regular review the implementation of the Convention and takes the decisions necessary to promote its effective implementation. It is the most important global anti-tobacco conference, and holds regular sessions at two-year intervals under the auspices of the WHO FCTC Convention Secretariat. The main focus for this year's session is the review of the implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) and the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products. Given its mandate, the tobacco industry and its allies **MUST NOT** in any way participate in this meeting as this would clearly be an act of interfering with the tobacco control policy formulation process.

The delegation of the Uganda Government at the COP 7, is headed by a team of Ministry of Health Officials. As members of the tobacco control Forum/ Coordination Mechanism, we strongly condemn efforts by some government officials to connive with the tobacco industry to interfere with tobacco control policies even at the global level.

Contrary to the assertion by Tobacco Industry and its allies that tobacco growing is being banned, the Tobacco Control Act, 2015 does not ban tobacco growing in any way. The Government is working on implementing WHO FCTC article 17 & 18 through its National agriculture policy (NAP: 2013). The policy aims at promoting and providing alternative livelihoods for persons engaged in tobacco growing.

Uganda ratified the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in 2007. As a party to this Public Health Treaty, Uganda is obligated to protect its public health policies with respect to tobacco control from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry (Article 5.3 of WHO FCTC), including measures related to international cooperation on tobacco control. Section 7(1) of the Tobacco Control Act 2015 requires a Minister of Health to designate a person within the Ministry to be the National Focal Point Person for tobacco control whose duties and obligations are highlighted under subsection 5 of the Law. A wider interpretation of the section infers powers to nominate delegates to COP. Indeed the COP and WHO Secretariat require the Ministry of Health to nominate participants for this meeting. The WHO FCTC encourages Governments to allow participation of Civil Society in tobacco control activities as stated by guiding principle 7 of the WHO FCTC including participation in COP.

Section 19 of the Act urges the Government to protect tobacco control policies from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry. This therefore means that the Act restricts Government officials from interacting, supporting, endorsing or accepting “any non-binding or non-enforceable agreement, agreement with the tobacco industry except for purposes of regulating and monitoring the tobacco industry or tobacco products and the interaction must be transparent”.

Participation of the tobacco industry and its allies in any activity furthering tobacco control, including FCTC Conference of Parties, is an attempt to promote tobacco industry interests at a global level and is forbidden under Article 5.3 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and our domestic law, given that the industry’s interests conflict with the overall public health goal.

With regard to tobacco control, the tobacco industry interests conflict with Government interests. Whereas, the interests of the industry is to maximize profits from toxic tobacco products, Government interests remain to reduce consumption of tobacco to protect people’s health from devastating health effects.

We therefore, urge all Government officials to abide by the Tobacco Control Act, 2015 and desist from getting involved into tobacco industry efforts to derail tobacco control efforts. There is no excuse whatsoever that justifies undermining domestic laws including the Tobacco Control Act, 2015 which was enacted to protect the health and lives of Ugandans.

FOR GOD AND MY COUNTRY.

Statement from the Tobacco Control Forum