



21 November 2017

## THE HONOURABLE SHINZO ABE

Prime Minister of Japan  
1-6-1 Nagata-cho, Chiyoda-ku,  
Tokyo 100 - 8968, Japan

Dear Prime Minister Abe,

### Japan must catch up with the rest of the world to protect the health of its people

We are appalled to read the recent decision by policy makers reported in the Japan Times [article](#) that restaurants and bars will not be 100 % smoke-free. (*'After resistance from ruling LDP, health ministry waters down planned smoking rules at eateries and bars'*, 16 November 2017).

Japan is the only OECD country that does not protect its people from exposure to secondhand smoke from cigarettes. It appears Japanese policymakers have forgotten their national and international obligations to protect the public from tobacco smoke. In June 2004, the Japanese government ratified the international public health treaty, the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), agreeing to make all its public places 100% smoke-free by June 2009. Thirteen years later, policymakers are still choosing to favor commercial profits of their tobacco business (Japan Tobacco Inc.) at the expense of protecting public health.

It is rather pitiful to see the Ministry of Health, Welfare and Labour being pushed back on the smoke-free policy, making Japan appear weak in the eyes of the international community.

About 56 percent of Japan Tobacco's profit comes from its international business where it boasts of selling cigarettes in 120 countries. Most of these 120 countries have instituted laws requiring public places to be 100% smoke-free and these include restaurants. Restaurants in Japan Tobacco International's key overseas cigarette markets such as in Taiwan, Russia, Spain and the United Kingdom are smoke-free by law. Recently JTI acquired tobacco companies in Ethiopia and the Philippines – restaurants in these countries are also 100% smoke-free.

In 2020 when the world converges in Tokyo as it hosts the Summer Olympics, international visitors to Tokyo will expect to eat in smoke-free restaurants and enjoy its smoke-free public places, particularly the Olympic Village and all Olympic competition venues.

The Olympic Games have been smoke-free since 1986. Japan has to ensure it complies with international standards and the requirements of the International Olympic Committee. It is time Japan started fulfilling its obligations and protecting its people from tobacco smoke.

*We call on the government of Japan to make restaurants and bars 100% smoke-free and fulfill its obligations under the WHO FCTC.*

Thank you.

Sincerely,

## MS. BUNGON RITTHIPHAKDEE

Executive Director, SEATCA

## DR. DOMILYN VILLARREIZ

Secretary-General, Smoke-free Cities Asia-Pacific Network (SCAN)



*About SCAN: Smoke-free Cities Asia Pacific Network (SCAN) is a coalition of smoke-free cities in the Asia Pacific region.*

*About SEATCA: SEATCA is a multi-sectoral non-governmental alliance promoting health and saving lives by assisting ASEAN countries to accelerate and effectively implement the evidence-based tobacco control measures contained in the WHO FCTC. Acknowledged by governments, academic institutions, and civil society for its advancement of tobacco control movements in Southeast Asia, the WHO bestowed on SEATCA the World No Tobacco Day Award in 2004 and the WHO Director-General's Special Recognition Award in 2014.*