

8 July 2019

Please refrain from attending events that falsely promote smoking cessation, which are managed by the tobacco industry.

The clever tobacco promotion event called “The smoke free index dialogue Tokyo” (scheduled to be held on 30 July at the Hilton Tokyo)

Dr. Manabu Sakuta, Chairperson, Japan Society for Tobacco Control, General incorporated

Forgive me for omitting a formal introduction, but I directly inform you of the following:

The upcoming event called Foundation for a Smoke-Free World (FSFW)¹ and the smoke free index dialogue (at the same event) is scheduled for 30 July in Tokyo.

At first glance, FSFW appears to be a group to promote social welfare and public health, but it actually promotes the interests of the domestic tobacco industry.

As a clever tobacco company that has tried to retain its business in nicotine products, Philip Morris Company (PM) will manage the event. PM is considered to be organization that operates against public health, and the World Health Organization (WHO) also does not support its operations.²

In fact, this event was scheduled to be implemented globally, but before being held in Turkey and Thailand, strong protests occurred, so that the event has been canceled (cited in GGTC open response: noted below).

The Japan Society for Tobacco Control Studies opposes holding this event in Tokyo. This is also consistent with the objectives of the World Health Organization (WHO).

To everyone, we ask that you please refrain from attending this event to avoid promoting the use of tobacco. We would like to ask you to cooperate to create a society without the health hazards caused by tobacco.

Sincerely yours

1. The “false” public health organization, which is managed by the tobacco industry: Foundation for a Smoke-Free World. <https://www.smokefreeworld.org>

2. World Health Organization (WHO) statement "WHO does not cooperate with the Smoke-Free World managed by PM"

WHO statement on Philip Morris funded Foundation for a Smoke-Free World
28 September 2017

<https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/28-09-2017-who-statement-on-philip-morris-funded-foundation-for-a-smoke-free-world>

We fully agree with this statement. *Manabu Sakuta*

WHO

Tobacco Free Initiative

July 5th, 2019

Dear colleagues,

On 30 July 2019, the think tank SustainAbility is organizing an event in Tokyo, funded by the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World (FSFW) in the Hilton Tokyo (<https://eu.eventscloud.com/ehome/200189962/Tokyo/>). As you know, the FSFW was created by the tobacco industry and receives 100% of its funding from Philip Morris. The event information invites public health stakeholders to participate, and says that the purpose of the meeting to inform the development of its "Smoke-free Index" which would highlight what they call "less harmful products" and initiate "smoke-free dialogue". This is part of a series of events that FSFW/industry has planned this year in major cities around the world. Public health communities in many of those countries have taken a strong stance against these events, and have refused to participate in them due to the organisers' link with the tobacco industry.

For instance, most recently, the event planned in Bangkok was cancelled after local tobacco control advocates campaigned against the event. Global Center for Good Governance in Tobacco Control in Thailand (WHO/CTC Knowledge Hub on Article 5.3) issued a statement summarizing why public health and government representatives should reject and denounce this event:

- FSFW is funded by Philip Morris International. PMI is aggressively marketing a heated tobacco products (iQOS) which they claim to support "smoke-free world" and their independence from the business interest of PMI is doubtful.
- WHO and many of the public health organizations and academia all over the world have rejected engagement with FSFW as its history of funding research to advance its own vested interests which are also of the tobacco industry.
- The development sector must not accommodate tobacco industry interests as it is known that tobacco hinders sustainable development goals in education, poverty, labor, gender, partnerships, environment, among others.

Their full statement is available

at: <https://ggtc.world/2019/07/01/tobacco-industrys-smoke-free-dialogue-global-center-for-good-governance-in-tobacco-control/>

The smoking ban in public places is now in place after the national law and the Tokyo ordinance came into force this year, and public health communities in Japan are making enormous efforts towards a smoke-free Olympic games in 2020. These gains may be undermined by the planned FSFW/industry event in Tokyo.

In this regard, Tobacco Free Initiative at WHO Regional Office for the Western Pacific would like to take this opportunity to urge our colleagues in Japan not to participate in this event or engage with FSFW and the tobacco industry, and to share the message around your community to inform everyone of the true nature of this event. Please help us to protect the health of Japanese people.

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Public Statement in relation to the invitation to attend tobacco industry-backed ‘Smoke Free Dialogue’

GGTC received invitations for two officers to attend the Smoke Free Dialogue, an event organized by SustainAbility, which is funded by the Foundation for a Smoke Free World (FSFW), on July 25 in Bangkok, Thailand. It came to our knowledge that many colleagues from the global public health community and the health ministries have received a similar invitation.

We take this opportunity to make it known why GGTC will not engage in this “dialogue,” in light of the fact that this is initiated by and involves the work of the Philip Morris funded Foundation for a Smoke Free World (FSFW):

1. The sponsor/ initiator, Foundation for Smoke Free World, is backed by the Tobacco Industry

FSFW is an entity entirely funded by a tobacco multinational company, Philip Morris International (PMI),¹ which is also aggressively marketing a heated tobacco product called IQOS to show its “commitment to the “smoke free world.” Analysts have challenged in detail FSFW’s claim relating to its independence, going into the nature of its operations and its agreement with PMI.ⁱⁱ Recent analysisⁱⁱⁱ of its tax reports show that most of its actions are geared towards public relations than on science.

2. WHO and member states have denounced FSFW and urged public health community and governments not to engage with it

Early this year, the WHO reiterated its 2017 statement urging all Parties to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), organizations, and individuals not to partner with FSFW because of its sponsor’s “known history of funding research to advance its own vested interest.”^{iv} v vi At the WHO Executive Board, the FSFW’s attempts to engage with WHO was faced with scathing remarks from member states. It became clear then that FSFW is classified as “those representing tobacco industry interests” that the WHO, by policy, does not engage or partner with. Public health organizations all over the world have also rejected the attempts of the FSFW to engage in public health issues. Prestigious schools and research organizations have also opposed funding from FSFW.

3. The development sector has a duty to comply with moral and legal duties to protect against tobacco industry interests

Tobacco control is now a key component of sustainable development while the tobacco industry’s practices of marketing and manufacturing its products and obstructing evidence-based life-saving measures have become identified as significant impediments to sustainable development. According to a UNDP report^{vii}, tobacco hinders progress in sustainable development goals in education, poverty, labor, gender, partnerships, environment, among others.

The tobacco industry and those promoting its interests have been identified as being responsible for the key barrier to tobacco control treaty implementation. The treaty obliges over 180 members to protect public health policies against the commercial and vested interests of the tobacco industry (Art 5.3). The Guidelines provide that public officials must not meet with the tobacco industry and those furthering its interests, unless it is strictly necessary for regulation. Hence, those working in the public health or development sector have:

1. a moral duty to help protect health policies from tobacco industry interests and
 2. a legal duty to ensure that governments do not violate its duty to protect its policies
- against the commercial and vested interests of the tobacco industry.

Therefore, we reject and denounce this event and we strongly urge the public health community and government representatives do the same. Tobacco control has limited resources. If we do nothing to expose this tactic, the tobacco industry would succeed in distracting us with seemingly innocuous programs which vow change despite lack of independence and sheer conflict of interest. In other words, the tobacco industry would succeed in using its vast resources to further limit our capacity to do legitimate tobacco control work.

We also urge those who have received funding from the FSFW to reject and denounce such funding in order to be consistent with their moral and legal duties to promote public interests and protect governments from tobacco industry interests.

Eight million lives and more will continue to be taken by the tobacco industry annually, and a whole new young generation are foreseen to be addicted to its new products; let no one, especially those the tobacco industry funds, tell you otherwise.

END

ⁱ 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. FSFW’s research grants will include research into the new products of PMI. Despite swimming in tobacco money, 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.

ⁱⁱ McCabe Center for Law and Cancer (2018). The new Philip Morris-funded Foundation for a Smoke-Free World: independent or not? Retrieved from <https://web.archive.org/web/20180301174248/http://untobaccocontrol.org/kh/legal-challenges/new-philip-morris-funded-foundation-smoke-free-world-independent-not/> (accessed on 25 January 2019).

ⁱⁱⁱ The Lancet published an [article](#) that analyzes on PMI-funded FSFW’s tax submissions. Evidence shows that most of the FSFW funding has gone more into public relations than into scientific researches. Stopping Tobacco Organizations and Products (STOP) prepared an [industry activity brief](#) which analyses the Foundation’s 2018 tax return.

^{iv} “This decades-long history means that research and advocacy funded by tobacco companies and their front groups cannot be accepted at face value. 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.”⁶

^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.”

^{vi} 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.”

^{vii} Excerpt from a [statement](#) released by the United Nations: “According to a [report](#) by WHO and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), it is estimated that up to one billion people could die from tobacco-related diseases this century. Currently, over seven million people die every year due to tobacco use. In addition, tobacco costs the global economy over a trillion dollars annually in medical expenses and lost productivity. As for the environmental impacts –deforestation and soil degradation for tobacco cultures, as well as water and soil pollution from cigarette littering – they cannot be overstated.”

Global Center for Good Governance in Tobacco Control (GGTC) aims to address the single greatest obstacle to tobacco control, tobacco industry interference. It is a joint initiative of the School of Global Studies, Thammasat University and Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance (SEATCA) and has been designated as the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Secretariat as the Knowledge Hub on Article 5.3, (treaty provision on countering tobacco industry interference). GGTC is also a key partner of the Bloomberg Philanthropies’ Stopping Tobacco Organizations and Products (STOP).

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