

Tobacco Europe statement on WHO allegations regarding industry engagement around FCTC negotiations

Tobacco Europe and its members reject the slanderous language used by the acting head of the FCTC Secretariat, which is not only attacking a legitimate and legal industry but in fact, is condescending towards democratically elected governments. It implies that sovereign states lack the independence or judgment to act in their citizens' best interests. Framing governments as passive victims of "evil" corporate forces risks drifting into conspiracy thinking rather than serious policy analysis.

Tobacco Europe member companies are well-established companies selling regulated legal products. If a company is legitimate enough to pay taxes to governments, then it is legitimate enough to participate in discussions concerning the industry. Not doing so equates to "taxation without representation."

Tobacco Europe and its members are committed to engaging transparently and publicly in decision-making processes affecting our business. We believe in the importance of inclusive stakeholder involvement ensuring that regulation is effective, proportionate, workable, and supported by credible evidence.

To ensure that no single voice unduly influences decisions on public policies, we encourage more transparency, accountability, and inclusiveness. Some call on governments not to hear selected perspectives and to exclude actors from important public deliberations: this is counterproductive and undermines trust in government because exclusion nurtures distrust among the population and increases the rise of conspiracies in society.

Rather than the industry allegedly spreading 'misleading' narratives, it looks like it is the WHO that fuels public disinformation campaigns with such accusations.

For instance, tobacco companies contribute to the scientific debate around novel products with independently peer-reviewed research. Dismissing such research undermines all principles of better regulation and evidence-based policymaking.

Another example is that the industry does not spread false economic narratives but provides facts and figures about the significant economic and fiscal contribution of the sector to many countries around the world.