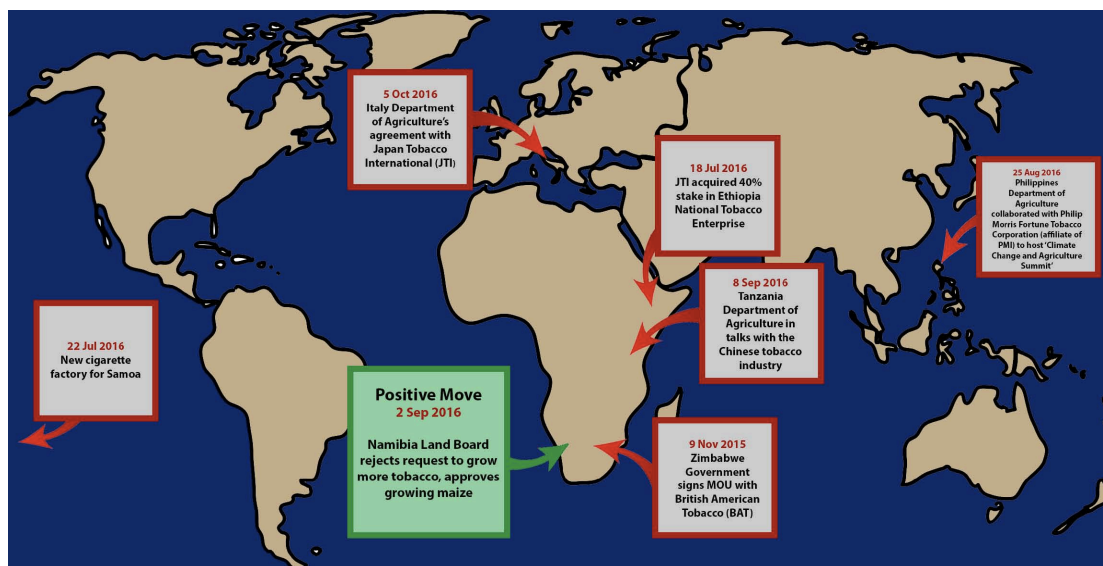


TOBACCO INDUSTRY AND FRONT GROUPS PUMP UP THEIR PROPAGANDA FOR COP7



RECENT AGREEMENTS BETWEEN GOVERNMENTS & TOBACCO COMPANIES

Over the past year, governments across the globe have continued to make new agreements with the tobacco industry, as shown above. However there is a ray of hope from Namibia, which is choosing to grow more food crops.

The tobacco industry is very angry that the Conference of the Parties (COP) is using Article 5.3 of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) to protect the policy-making process from industry interference.

The industry has hijacked the “public space” of the COP. FCTC Parties have responded in recent sessions by not allowing participation from the “public”, which is dominated by industry representatives. For COP7, FCA is recommending Parties adopt pre-screening processes for the public and for the media. (Presently, media is in the category public).

The industry has gone on the offensive: conducting an international campaign to attack and discredit the COP and the World Health Organization (WHO) about lack of transparency. Industry representatives have written angry letters to both the COP and WHO

and published many statements in the media criticising the COP’s lack of ‘transparency’, which strikes a chord with broader society.

The industry throws a tantrum whenever it does not get its way, and has no qualms in criticising the 180 governments that are FCTC Parties. In one statement, a representative of Japan Tobacco International (JTI) said the industry wants to see change, (read, “we want to influence the COP”), and that it needs to “keep raising our voice about these censorship practices”.

Since the tobacco industry has no credibility to criticise the COP and tobacco control, it has recruited front groups, think tanks and sympathetic individuals to sing from its song sheet.

The Institute of Economic Affairs (IEA) is one such close ally. It advises the industry to talk more about “due process and fairness and less about the specifics

of tobacco policy in drawing attention to this issue”.

According to the IEA, “With regard to [Article] 5.3 and COP, the industry needs to find allies amongst groups who take an interest in transparency, openness and constitutional structures. Such groups needn’t be sympathetic to the regulatory agenda of the industry; indeed they may even be antagonistic to the industry and tobacco products in general. That needn’t matter—the issue here is about the manner in which policy is developed and created, not the exact content of the policy.”

Another industry funded group, the International Tax and Investment Centre (ITIC), has stepped up its efforts to protect industry interests ever since the FCTC Secretariat issued a Note Verbal in 2014 about its activities. Earlier this year, an ITIC consultant, Gary Johns, wrote to several civil society groups involved in tobacco control

taking issue with the critiques they had done on the ITIC's skewed research. In a 36-page letter he sent to the Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance (SEATCA) earlier this year Johns wrote, "vested interests are not the problem - debate behind closed doors is".

The letter was riddled with false accusations against SEATCA,

mischaracterisations of fact and law, disparaging comments about the WHO, the Framework Convention Secretariat and FCTC Parties. SEATCA published an open letter in response.

In September, Johns, a former Australian Labour Minister, released a publication attacking WHO for not conducting its business in "transparent fashion and in public view." The tobacco industry publicised his report in the Tobacco Reporter.

Another industry front group, the International Tobacco Growers Association (ITGA), which routinely rounds up its

members to rabble rouse at COP sessions, has stepped up its misinformation campaign. ITGA's Indian member Federation of All India

Farmer Associations (FAIFA) has been applying pressure on the Indian government to allow its members to the COP using arguments of "principles of transparency and equity".

ITGA's president has also claimed that the FCTC had banned dozens of officials representing tobacco-growing countries from participating in COP7. A similar statement was made by a new NGO representative cum journalist, who claimed, "The policy of banning delegates having associations with tobacco production is said to be so broad that it will almost certainly prohibit finance ministers, economic development secretaries, public health officials, and even presidents and prime ministers ..."

In September, ITGA members from North and

South America, India, Europe, Africa, and Indonesia were in New Delhi for a two-day seminar to prepare their protests for COP7.

The ITGA claims COP decisions are being made "only by health officials and activists". This is simply not true.

Government delegations have included officials from non-health departments, such as ministries of agriculture, industry and trade, as official COP records show (Table 1).

In 2008, FCTC Parties adopted Article 5.3 guidelines. They include recommendations 4.9 and 8.3, which explicitly state that Parties should not nominate any person employed by the tobacco industry, or any entity working to further the industry's interests, to serve on delegations to COP or other FCTC meetings, nor should any representatives of state-owned tobacco industries be included on government delegations.