

ASH Statement of Support for Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance (SEATCA)

Action on Smoking and Health (ASH) is a Washington, DC based non-governmental organization fully devoted to supporting global health and international tobacco control efforts. As the oldest anti-tobacco organization in the U.S., ASH was formed in 1967 in response to the U.S. Surgeon General Report in order to use legal action to fight tobacco and protect non-smokers. Because tobacco is the leading cause of preventable death worldwide, today ASH uses global tools to counter the global tobacco epidemic.

American think-tank, the International Tax and Investment Center (ITIC) has written to SEATCA a tobacco control NGO in Thailand, a letter riddled with false accusations.

ASH stands firmly with SEATCA in its reaction to the petty attack from the International Tax and Investment Center. Through its efforts to end the tobacco epidemic, SEATCA has no doubt saved many lives, and ASH has been proud to work alongside them on many issues. While SEATCA works to save lives, the tobacco industry continues to profit from a product that it knows – indeed engineered – to be deadly when used as directed.

The rationale for ITIC's attack is obvious. As SEATCA points out, there is an irreconcilable conflict of interest between health and the tobacco industry, and ITIC is demonstrably part of the tobacco industry. The only conclusion we can draw is that SEATCA is worryingly – from ITIC's perspective – effective in its mission. Over its nearly 50 year history ASH has been attacked by the tobacco industry multiple times, and is proud of each instance. We hope SEATCA takes some pride in this attack.

Multinational tobacco companies have known for decades their status as pariahs, and have long used front groups like ITIC to do their public outreach. Their facade is thin and unconvincing. Dr. Johns should be ashamed for his role in perpetuating disease and death.

Dr. Johns' attacks on the World Health Organization and the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control are equally ludicrous. The global response to the tobacco epidemic has saved tens of millions of lives, and promises to save perhaps a billion more. One cannot measure that success against the profits of corporations that deal in addiction and death.

ASH congratulates SEATCA on this clear indication of its effectiveness, and is proud to count SEATCA among its friends and allies.