

12 July 2019

E. Ulysses Dorotheo, MD, FPAO

Executive Director, Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance (SEATCA)
Thakolsuk Place, Room 2B 115 Thoddamri Road
Dusit, Bangkok 10300
Thailand

Re: PMI-funded foundation attempts to undermine SEATCA's critical reporting work

Dear Dr. Dorotheo,

Corporate Accountability fully supports SEATCA's campaign to challenge attempts by the Philip Morris-funded Foundation for a Smoke-Free World to interfere with the public health community's ability to assess and report on the global tobacco epidemic.

Philip Morris International (PMI) has long tried to disrupt the vital role the global tobacco control community plays in curbing the tobacco epidemic. In 2017, Reuters exposed PMI's massive clandestine campaign¹ to undermine global public health policymaking. The investigation revealed internal documents naming SEATCA directly as an organization the industry found particularly concerning to its tobacco operations. One such document even states, "we're still building ASEAN-wide counterweights to SEATCA, the major ATO [anti-tobacco organization] in Asia."² A central and important component of SEATCA's global tobacco control monitoring has been its Smoke-Free Index, first published in 2016.

Meanwhile, it has become increasingly clear that this PMI-funded foundation exists to advance the goals and objectives of the industry itself, pushing the same "smoke-free" narrative about its deadly and addictive tobacco products. That's why the foundation has been roundly rejected by tobacco control institutions the world over—from respected universities to the United Nations—as a blatant smokescreen for the industry to interfere once more in public health research and policymaking.

¹ <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/section/pmi/>

² <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/3892762-2014-Corporate-Affairs-Approach-and-Issues.html>

The Philip Morris-funded foundation’s attempt to trademark the term “Smoke-Free Index” is simply its latest attempt to muddy the waters on tobacco control globally, and to block the vital and legitimate work of organizations like SEATCA monitoring and countering the global tobacco epidemic.

We fully support SEATCA’s campaign to save lives from the devastation of the tobacco industry, and urge regulators and decision-makers around the globe to reject the trademark application for the “Smoke-Free Index”—and all other tactics of the Philip Morris-funded foundation.

Sincerely,

Michél Legendre
Associate Campaign Director, Corporate Accountability

For media purposes:

Corporate Accountability stands alongside SEATCA in rejecting Philip Morris International’s latest attempt to undermine progress on global tobacco control. The so-called Foundation for a Smoke-Free World has already been exposed and discredited as nothing more than a smokescreen for the deadly corporation to interfere in public health research and policymaking globally. Its bogus “smoke-free” label aims to bolster its profits by pushing yet another generation of deadly, addictive tobacco products. And its trademarking of “Smoke-Free Index” is just another thinly veiled attempt to push these products—while blocking the legitimate, lifesaving work of organizations like SEATCA that have been using the term for years. The global tobacco control community isn’t fooled. We urge regulators around the globe to reject the foundation’s trademark application—and any other attempts by PMI and its proxies to interfere in lifesaving tobacco control measures.