

# TOBACCO AND GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP

## How Tobacco Control and Development Goal 17 Fit Together

### BACKGROUND

The UN General Assembly formally adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in September 2015. The goals call for all countries to eliminate poverty and hunger worldwide, protect the climate, ensure access to education, and improve health within the next 15 years.

The implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control is also mentioned in goal three (healthcare). With good reason, considering the fact that six million people die every year as a result of consuming addictive tobacco products. This is the most preventable cause of death through a non-communicable disease (NCD).

Tobacco consumption also contributes to hunger and poverty, as scarce resources are spent on the addiction rather than on food in poor households. Furthermore, tobacco-related diseases are also associated with high costs.<sup>1</sup> Tobacco production around the world goes hand in hand with the exploitation

of farmers and with the use of child labour in at least 17 countries.<sup>2</sup> The heavy use of pesticides poisons farmers, soils and waters, whilst the process of curing tobacco leaves is responsible for at least 200,000 hectares of natural forest being cut down every year.<sup>3</sup>

### NO ORDINARY PRODUCT

Not all of the targets set are applicable to the case of tobacco control. On the contrary, the undifferentiated pursuit of targets 17.10 to 17.12 which focus on trade policies would be highly problematic.

### GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP

**SDG 17:** International cooperation between governments, civil society and the private economy for the provision of financial resources, for knowledge sharing and for systemic changes.

The tobacco industry makes a 44 billion US dollar profit every year, of which at least 27 billion are made in middle- and low-income countries. At the same time the industry is responsible for costing national economies between 750 billion and 1.5 trillion US dollars every year.<sup>4</sup>

Tobacco therefore has a negative impact on the achievement of several development goals. This is why supporting tobacco control through a revitalized global partnership (SDG 17) is important.

When used as intended, tobacco kills half of its users. For this reason tobacco can not be treated like any other product under the WTO (SDG 17.10). Likewise, an increase in exports (SDG 17.11) or an expansion of duty-free markets (SDG 17.12) would be counterproductive. The latter would even violate Article 6 of the FCTC.<sup>5</sup>

### PHILIP MORRIS VS. URUGUAY

#### Multi-Stakeholder Partnership for Tobacco Control Prevails

In 2009, Uruguay decided to introduce pictorial warnings that would cover 80% of cigarette packs. The tobacco corporation Philip Morris thereupon initiated an Investor-State Dispute Settlement and demanded 25 million US dollars in compensation. The company intended to set an example to stop other countries from doing the same. In 2016, the tribunal decided against Philip Morris. The corporation must now cover part of Uruguay's legal costs (7 out of 10 million US dollars). Without the international support of several parties, especially financial support from Bloomberg Philanthropies, Uruguay would not have been able to get through the process and would have almost given up.<sup>6</sup>



## INCREASING RESOURCES

Some tobacco control measures, such as advertising bans, pictorial warnings and non-smoking acts cost almost nothing. One of the most effective tobacco control instruments is taxation, which even contributes to increasing the financial resources of states (SDG 17.1, FCTC Art. 6). Tax increases can motivate smokers to stop smoking and above all they can deter young people from starting smoking.<sup>7</sup> Countries such as Argentina, Costa Rica and the Philippines specifically invest these revenues in healthcare and poverty reduction.<sup>8</sup>

In order to prevent cigarette sales from bypassing tax laws it is important to combat smuggling and organised crime (SDGs 17.1, 17.3, 16.4). This would enable middle- and low-income countries to take in an extra 18.3 billion US dollars and for them to save 132,000 human lives each year from 2030 onwards.<sup>9</sup>

### TOBACCO CONTROL IS PART OF THE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

With **SDG 3**, the United Nations want to “ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”. This includes target 3.a, which aims to strengthen the implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC).

In order to achieve this, the FCTC Parties should sign the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products.<sup>10</sup>

Parties to the FCTC must also meet their financial obligations towards the FCTC Secretariat by paying their voluntary assessed contributions to the FCTC budget. European countries are responsible for almost half of the outstanding accounts.<sup>11</sup>

Furthermore, Northern countries must meet their ODA-obligations. In 2015, only six out of 35 OECD countries met the target of investing 0.7% or more of their gross national income in development aid (SDG 17.2). Countries such as Germany, France, Canada and the United States remained far below the target.<sup>12</sup>

A portion of the additional development funds should be spent on the prevention of NCDs (SDGs 3.4, 3.a, FCTC Art. 26.3-26.5). NCDs represent about half of the global disease burden in low- and middle-income countries. Yet these diseases only received 1.2% of the total development funds allocated to the health sector in 2011. Tobacco-related diseases worldwide were allocated 68 million US dollars (0.2%).<sup>13</sup> If Germany had fulfilled its 0.7%-commitment, the country would have invested around 10 billion US dollars more. Just one percent of this amount would double the development funds available worldwide for tobacco control.<sup>14</sup>

In countries such as Malawi, Zimbabwe and Bangladesh, where tobacco growing contributes to the impoverishment of farmers, to child labour and food insecurity, alternative livelihoods should be promoted through development funds (FCTC Art. 17).<sup>15</sup>

External debts of tobacco growing countries that are highly dependent on exports as a result of their foreign debt (e.g. Malawi) should be cancelled (SDG 17.4).<sup>16</sup> The resources set free could also be invested in supporting alternatives to tobacco growing.

### GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR TOBACCO CONTROL

The exchange of knowledge, experience and technologies between various state and non-state parties (SDGs 17.6, 17.9, 17.17, 17.18) has moved tobacco control forward, particularly since the adoption of the FCTC. Effective measures have been included in the Guidelines for the

FCTC implementation which were jointly developed by the parties.<sup>17</sup>

An example of a successful multi-stakeholder partnership is the Tobacco to Bamboo project in Kenya.

Kenyan Universities, the Kenyan Government, the International Network for Bamboo and Rattan (INBAR) and smallholder farmer cooperatives worked together to shift out of tobacco. The project was funded by the Canadian Government.<sup>18</sup>

As well, the successful defense against Philip Morris' illegitimate demands in its Investor-State Dispute Settlement against Uruguay was only possible thanks to the cooperation of various international stakeholders (see blue box).

On the other hand, harmful partnerships can delay and undermine tobacco control and sustainable development. The Eliminating Child Labour in Tobacco Growing (ECLT) Foundation operated by tobacco companies is such an example: Critics emphasize, that the work of ECLT does not change the systemic causes of child labour in tobacco growing. Instead the foundation is used as a means of improving the image of the tobacco industry. It is disastrous that the International Labor Organization (ILO) and Save the Children Switzerland cooperate with ECLT and thereby legitimise their work.<sup>19</sup>

Public-Private Partnerships promoted by governments can also have serious consequences for sustainable development. The New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition in Malawi – under the auspices of the EU, United Kingdom, Germany and other donors – cooperates with leaf tobacco merchants and supports tobacco growing in the country although the crop significantly contributes to food insecurity.<sup>20</sup> Governments should therefore ensure they draft policies that are coherent in terms of sustainable development (SDG 17.14).

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Unfairtobacco.org  
c/o BLUE 21 | Gneisenaustr. 2a | 10961 Berlin  
Phone: +49 - (0)30 - 694 6101 | Email: [info@unfairtobacco.org](mailto:info@unfairtobacco.org)  
Website: [www.unfairtobacco.org](http://www.unfairtobacco.org)

Author: Laura Graen, [lauragraen.de](mailto:lauragraen.de)  
Layout: Michael Tümpfner, [neungradplus.de](http://neungradplus.de)

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