

Policy Briefing

This document relates to item POL 5 of the Agenda for the 334th Session of the ILO GB in Geneva (25 October – 8 November 2018) and corresponds to the document GB.334/POL/5

Integrated strategy to address decent work deficits in the tobacco sector

Key Recommendations

The ILO Governing Body should decide at its 334th session to

- no longer accept any funding from tobacco industry including corporations profiting from tobacco and ancillary groups that receive tobacco industry funds, in accordance with the [UN model policy](#),
- start implementing the integrated strategy using Regular Budget Supplementary Account funds in the short term, and
- work closely with relevant UN agencies to assist tobacco farmers and farm workers with alternative livelihood strategies as recommended in the WHO FCTC Article 17.

Context

At its 334th session, the Governing Body of the International Labour Organization (ILO) will redefine and update the way it conducts business when it comes to the tobacco industry, in particular with regards to accepting financial contributions. This decision has previously been postponed three times. In its document [GB.334/POL/5](#), the ILO outlines an integrated strategy to address decent work deficits in the tobacco sector and explores the mobilization of the necessary resources for its implementation.

In line with the call of civil society during the past years, the integrated strategy states that “*it would (...) not be appropriate to renew the PPPs with the tobacco industry after their expiry in 2018*” (Para 37).

The document discusses the option of establishing a fund which would still “*allow the industry to financially support the implementation of the integrated strategy*” (Para 38 - 40). In this scenario, donations would be anonymous to the extent possible.

If donations were truly anonymous and did not provide donors with influence over programming, it is difficult to see why tobacco companies would be interested in contributing. More likely, companies would find ways to ensure their ‘anonymous’ donations receive publicity, e.g. by getting media to report on their donations, which would presumably still need to be mentioned in publicly available regulatory filings. Rightly, the ILO observes the “*reputational risk to the ILO from accepting funding from the tobacco industry, even if received from such a Fund, particularly in the context of UN system-wide coherence and reform efforts*” (Para 41). In the same paragraph, the ILO background document also points out, continuing receipt of tobacco industry funding, albeit via an ‘anonymous’ fund, would endanger efforts to secure funding from other sources, in particular Parties to the FCTC.

After lengthy discussions in the past years, the ILO must finally ensure that it no longer accepts financial contributions from the tobacco industry in any form as called for by the UN model policy. We agree that mobilizing alternative sources of funding for the integrated strategy and building a broad coalition of development partners, especially UN agencies such as the UNDP, FAO, UNICEF and the World Bank, are key to successfully tackle the decent work deficits in the tobacco sector. For example, UNDP has recently begun a programme aimed at helping tobacco farmers find viable alternative livelihoods through social impact bonds.

In its strategy, the ILO emphasizes the need for direct action in tobacco growing countries, e.g. Malawi, Uganda, Tanzania and Zambia. As observed in the case of Malawi, tackling decent work deficits in tobacco growing areas involves a diverse set of measures, also ending child labour. CSR activities in child labour alone are insufficient to address the numerous problems tobacco farmers face. A recent [report](#) published by the FCTC Convention Secretariat demonstrates that the environmental impacts of cigarettes

are largely due to cultivation and curing, and borne mostly by people in low and middle income countries, whereas the profits are mostly realised by transnational corporations. Tobacco's significant negative environmental, health, social and economic implications for both society and the households involved in the industry, make it incompatible with achieving the global sustainable development goals.

Besides, over the years, continuous ILO support programmes to end child labour through tobacco industry backed ECLT in tobacco growing countries has not delivered any sustainable or meaningful impact.

ILO's relation to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)

The ILO is an observer to the WHO FCTC Conference of the Parties (COP) and is familiar with obligations of the FCTC Article 5.3, the model policy for UN agencies and that it should not be receiving tobacco sponsored funds. The ILO is also a member of the UN Inter-Agency Task Force on the Prevention and Control of Non-Communicable Diseases (UNIATF).

At the recent 8th Session of the COP in Geneva (1-6 October 2018), governments adopted important decisions. We would like to draw attention to the following decisions by highlighting relevant parts.

Decision on Article 5.3:

"Recognizing that the tobacco industry and those representing its interests have been attempting to associate themselves with United Nations agencies, initiatives and programmes, including in the area of addressing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and programmes to control noncommunicable diseases (NCDs);

Recognizing the landmark resolutions adopted by the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in 2017 and 2018 to call organizations of the United Nations system not to accept funding from the tobacco industry and develop their own model policies, and noting with appreciation the delisting of the tobacco industry from the United Nations Global Compact as adopted by its Board in July 2017;

Encourages Parties:

(d) to further enhance policy coherence within governments and require that all government sectors relevant to the implementation of the Convention, not only the health sector, comply with the requirements of Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC, and reflect the same in positions put forward in different governing bodies of the United Nations system;

Decision on the relationship of the Convention Secretariat with other international entities:

Recognizing the important work of the Convention Secretariat to promote the implementation of the "Model policy for agencies of the United Nations system on preventing tobacco industry interference";

Calls upon Parties:

to promote tobacco control policy coherence in the governing bodies of the relevant IGOs, including ILO;

The FCTC COP also took another decision about tobacco growers and farm workers which is relevant to the ILO:

Considering the high prevalence of child and youth labour and research showing that among farm families that substituted tobacco growing for other crops, this prevalence has dropped significantly;

Understanding that the implementation of WHO FCTC Articles 17 and 18, through switching to viable economic alternatives, is a central measure to safeguard the livelihoods and health of tobacco farmers, which may be affected by a future reduction of tobacco demand, and a tool to enhance Article 5.3 to protect tobacco control measures from tobacco industry interference,

decides:

(d) to invite Parties to encourage farmers, including through technical assistance, to switch to viable alternatives to tobacco farming;

requests the Convention Secretariat:

(d) to seek and continue collaboration with other United Nations bodies, as appropriate, and with relevant international organizations, including regional and subregional organizations, to support Parties in the implementation of WHO FCTC Articles 17 and 18;