

Myth 4: The tobacco industry is vital to the economy.

False: Tobacco-related harms sap government budgets and economic output, resulting in substantial GDP loss. Most benefits from tobacco sales accrue to multinational tobacco corporations, leaving countries to contend with the health and development impacts.²¹ In Jordan in 2015 the tobacco industry generated 889 million Jordanian Dinar (JOD) (US\$1.2 billion), which included government tax revenue, employee wages and payments by the industry to the government for goods and services. However, total economic losses to the country due to tobacco use were far higher at JOD 1.6 billion (US\$2.2 billion).²²

4. Parliamentarians can take important first steps to advance tobacco control and accelerate progress towards the SDGs.

Parliamentarians have the power to reduce the demand for and supply of tobacco at population level. They can powerfully shape daily conditions and development opportunities that will lead to longer, healthier and more productive lives for their constituents. In the first instance, parliamentarians can:

- Call for legislation on and enforcement of the WHO FCTC to achieve its full implementation and on becoming a Party to achieving implementation of Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products.
- Ensure an effective multisectoral tobacco control response by working with relevant ministries as well as non-state actors, for example, through parliamentary oversight.
- Promote parliamentary debate on tobacco control and present, share and discuss tobacco-related data relevant to the country.
- Emphasize the economic burden of tobacco-related diseases and tobacco illicit trade and gains from advanced tobacco control in all relevant legislation and budgets.
- Assess and tackle tobacco-industry interference in policymaking, for example, by ensuring transparency in interactions with the tobacco industry, requesting a committee inquiry into conflicts of interest, pushing for the adoption of non-interference clauses in tobacco control legislation, and debunking myths spread by the tobacco industry.

In line with the Convention Secretariat's [Global Strategy to Accelerate Tobacco Control 2025](#) and [UNDP's Strategic Plan 2022-2025](#) and [HIV, Health and Development Strategy \(2022-2025\)](#), these briefs emphasise the importance of a coordinated, multisectoral whole-of-government approach to tobacco control, empowering Parties to work across sectors to achieve policy coherence.

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Tobacco Control

What Parliamentarians Need to Know

Key Points

- 1 Tobacco control is a cost-effective way to advance health and the economy and protect the environment.
- 2 Tobacco control laws are a key tool to tackling the health, economic and development burdens associated with tobacco.
- 3 Parliamentarians can separate fact from fiction and protect the public from tobacco industry interference.
- 4 Parliamentarians can take important first steps to advance tobacco control and accelerate progress towards the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3) aims 'to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages'.¹ One of the means of achieving this goal is to strengthen implementation of the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) in all countries, as appropriate (Target 3.a).

The WHO FCTC is a legally binding treaty that reaffirms the right to health.² It was developed in response to the tobacco epidemic and currently has 183 Parties, covering more than 90 percent of the global population.³

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1. Tobacco control is a cost-effective way to advance health and the economy and protect the environment.

The costs of treating tobacco-related diseases are high and unaffordable for many cities and countries. Prioritizing preventive measures such as those in the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC),⁴ and ensuring access to treatment and care for those in need, are key to improving health and advancing tobacco control.

The costs of scaling-up tobacco control through WHO FCTC implementation are very low compared to their burden, while the returns are massive.⁵ In health terms, the return will be avoiding millions of premature deaths, illnesses and disabilities. Analysis of 24 low- and middle-income countries (LMICs) as part of phase 1 and 2 of the FCTC 2030 project found that investing in stronger tobacco control can save 1.2 million lives over 15 years.ⁱ

Indeed, increased tobacco taxation alone provides enormous economic and health benefits. Taxes that raise the retail price of tobacco by 20 percent could produce a global gain of US\$2 trillion and 161 million life years over 50 years; gains increase to US\$3.6 trillion and 402 million life years with tobacco tax increases of 50 percent.⁶ In addition to the economic and health benefits, scaling-up tobacco control will help protect the environment from tobacco-associated pollution.

2. Tobacco control laws are a key tool to tackling the health, economic and development burdens associated with tobacco.

Enactment of tobacco control laws is a key step to tackling the tobacco-related burden on health, the economy and sustainable development. Members of Parliament (MPs), as elected representatives of their people, are vital in ensuring that Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in general and the WHO FCTC in

particular are translated into laws, policies, and programmes. As such, MPs have a responsibility and opportunity to deliver and drive people-centred tobacco legislation, by pressing for government policies and programmes in accordance with the WHO FCTC.

MPs may face constraints in delivering tobacco legislation, including resource and time limitations. Due to the importance of their role, they can also be a key target for the tobacco industry as it tries to manipulate legislative action intended to regulate the industry. However, MPs can take important steps to tackle industry interference.

THE DEADLY CONSEQUENCES OF TOBACCO AND WHY GOVERNMENT SECTORS MUST WORK TOGETHER TO IMPLEMENT THE WHO FCTC

The social, economic and environmental impacts of tobacco consumption and production are staggering. Tobacco kills more than 8 million people each year, with LMICs disproportionately burdened.⁷ Smoking-attributable diseases cost the global economy over a trillion US dollars annually, due to medical expenses and lost productivity.⁸ The environmental impacts, due to plastic pollution, deforestation, and soil degradation from tobacco growing, as well as water and soil pollution from pesticide use and cigarette littering, are of growing concern.

Levels of tobacco consumption and production in society are determined largely by policies beyond the health sector. This means that the development consequences of tobacco are largely avoidable through better policy coherence and common strategies that deliver shared gains for all sectors involved, accelerating progress against multiple SDGs.



ⁱ Based on national FCTC investment cases conducted through the FCTC 2030 project.

TACKLING ILLICIT TRADE IN TOBACCO PRODUCTS TO BOOST HEALTH AND TAX INCOME

While the scope of illicit trade in tobacco products is often overstated by the tobacco industry, it can be an economic problem that impacts health and security as well. Illicit tobacco products are usually more accessible and affordable than legal ones, impacting particularly on young people, the poor and other vulnerable groups by undermining WHO FCTC price measures and thus increasing tobacco consumption.⁹ By avoiding taxation, illicit products also lead to a substantial loss of national tax income.¹⁰ Moreover, illicit trade in tobacco products contributes to the funding of transnational criminal activities, including terrorist groups.¹¹

Fortunately, there is specific support to address this issue. The Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products is a new international treaty, built on Article 15 of the WHO FCTC, and adopted by the Conference of the Parties in 2012. It entered into force in September 2018 and as of the time of writing has 66 Parties.¹² The Protocol aims to secure the supply chain of tobacco products through a global tracking and tracing regime, comprising national and/or regional tracking and tracing systems as well as licensing, among other measures. The Protocol further covers matters concerning offences and international legal and administrative cooperation. Importantly, countries should be aware of and actively counterbalance the tobacco industry's interference in tobacco control policies, including those relating to illicit trade.

3. Parliamentarians can separate fact from fiction and protect the public from tobacco industry interference.

The tobacco industry seeks to maintain lax policy environments and employs interference tactics, for example, creating industry-backed 'front groups' of consumers or farmers to obstruct progressive tobacco control legislation. Experiences in many countries prove that – contrary to industry-biased forecasts – tobacco control can actually raise government revenue, help businesses, improve livelihoods and increase employment overall.

While Parliamentarians may not be able to avoid contact with the tobacco industry altogether, any interactions should be limited, transparent and following guidelines provided under the WHO FCTC Article 5.3.¹³ Parliamentarians can help tackle industry interference by requesting for a committee inquiry into, or otherwise drawing attention to, the enforcement of the rules on conflict of interest and lobbying as well as by

pushing for the adoption and implementation of appropriate measures. These could encompass including WHO FCTC Article 5.3 in national legislation as well as non-interference clauses in tobacco control legislation and creating a register of lobbyists and conflict of interest codes of conduct for private sector entities, amongst other steps. To debunk myths perpetuated by the tobacco industry, MPs can compare the information provided by the tobacco industry with reliable sources to reveal any likely discrepancies.¹⁴

Counterarguments to common myths promoted by the tobacco industry

Myth 1: A tax on tobacco reduces government revenue.

False: Tobacco taxes reduce consumption, thereby reducing tobacco-related harms, while increasing government revenue.¹⁵ In 2015, China increased its wholesale tax rate on cigarettes from 5 to 11 percent. After one year, cigarette sales dropped by 3.3 percent. The tax delivered an additional 70 billion yuan (US\$11 billion) to the central government in that one year.¹⁶

Myth 2: A smoke-free ban harms business.

False: A smoke-free ban is good for business, an outcome that has been proven in many countries. As an example, in 2008, Mexico City implemented a smoke-free law covering restaurants, bars and nightclubs. The ban did not harm city businesses; in fact, economic evidence suggests a positive impact on restaurants' income, employees' wages and levels of employment.¹⁷

Myth 3: Shifting from tobacco farming takes away jobs and money.

False: Farmers can switch to health-promoting crops, which are more lucrative and healthier for them and are not enmeshed with debt-bonded, exploitative tobacco industry contracts.^{18,19} Indeed, in Indonesia non-tobacco farmers were earning substantially larger incomes than tobacco farmers on average, and farmers who switched to non-tobacco crops typically gained in profits.²⁰