

# Dominican Republic

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## Summary of Findings

### 1. INDUSTRY PARTICIPATION IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT

The level of tobacco industry (TI) involvement in policy development is high in the Dominican Republic. The government actively collaborates with the TI in various aspects, including the development of national plans, and lobbying and promotion of tobacco use. The government supports and endorses policies or legislation developed in collaboration with the TI, of particular note is the law declaring tobacco and the Dominican cigar as cultural heritage of the Dominican Republic. Additionally the government allows the TI to participate in multisectoral committees and advisory groups that establish public health policies. The Dominican Republic is a non-Party to the WHO FCTC, and its delegation to the COP did not include TI representatives.

### 2. INDUSTRY CSR ACTIVITIES

The TI in the Dominican Republic is actively engaged in various corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities. Government agencies and officials endorse, support, and form partnerships with the TI in multiple CSR initiatives; such as supporting rural women in agricultural projects, offering scholarships in agriculture, and collaborating with a TI foundation to build schools. The TI also collaborates with various organizations to hold graduation ceremonies for artisanal cigar production courses, organize tribute events, and makes donations to support local communities and institutions.

### 3. BENEFITS TO THE INDUSTRY

The TI benefits from relief efforts and privileges from the government. In the last 20 years there have been no new or relevant tobacco control laws in the health regulation, and the old laws that included tobacco control measures have never been updated.

The government offers privileges, incentives, and tax exemptions to the TI. Only imported components used in the manufacture of tobacco products are subject to taxation, and the National Tobacco Revival Plan aims to further eliminate taxes on locally manufactured tobacco.

International travelers over the age of 16 may import up to 200 cigarettes duty free when entering the country.

### 4. UNNECESSARY INTERACTION

There are multiple recorded forms of unnecessary interaction between government officials and the TI in the Dominican Republic. High-level government officials, including the president and vice president, meet and foster relationships with tobacco companies by attending social functions, events, and meetings. They have also participated in events celebrating the TI.

The government welcomes assistance from the TI in law enforcement activities, such as the fight against the illicit tobacco trade. This includes signing agreements and collaborating with TI representatives and companies to develop technical capabilities, improve anti-smuggling laws, and in the implementation of measures to combat tax evasion and illicit trade in tobacco products.



## 5. TRANSPARENCY

The government lacks transparency in its interactions with the TI. Meetings and interactions with the TI, such as the closed-door meeting with the acting president, are not publicly disclosed. This leaves the public uninformed about the issues discussed. Though INTABACO, a national infrastructure with legal autonomy, is meant to maintain records of TI entities and act as a state-sponsored lobbyist, transparency in these processes is limited.

## 6. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

There are conflicts of interest in the government in relation to the TI. The government does not limit financial support from the TI to political entities, in accordance with Electoral Law 275-97. Retired and current government officials, such as former president Hipólito Mejía and current vice-president Raquel Peña, have held executive positions in the TI. The Minister of Industry, Commerce and SMEs, Víctor-Ito-Bisonó, has also shown strong support for the tobacco sector, highlighting its importance in providing employment in the country.

## 7. PREVENTIVE MEASURES

The government has not implemented sufficient preventive measures to regulate interactions with the TI. There is no obligation to disclose records of interactions, nor is there a code of conduct for public officials dealing with the TI. While companies are required to provide production and marketing information for tax purposes, there is no evidence of lobbying, philanthropy, or political contribution requirements. As a “non-Party” to the WHO FCTC, the government does not sensitize its departments to the FCTC Article 5.3 Guidelines. In addition, there are no policies prohibiting the acceptance of contributions or gifts from the TI.