

Gabon



Summary of Findings

1. INDUSTRY PARTICIPATION IN POLICY DEVELOPMENT

From April 2021 to March 2023, no tobacco industry (TI) involvement was observed or noted in the development of health policies in Gabon.

2. INDUSTRY CSR ACTIVITIES

On April 06, 2022, Prix Import, the Compagnie d'exploitations commerciales africaines - Société gabonaise de distribution (CECA GADIS Group), and the Ministry of Communication signed two framework partnership agreements to support renovation work on the set of the 1st television channel and the audiovisual production unit of the Ministry of Communication.

3. BENEFITS TO THE INDUSTRY

In 2017 the Gabonese government, with the support of the WHO, agreed to introduce a mixed taxation system for tobacco products (ad valorem taxation of 25% and a specific tax of around CFA francs 300 per pack of cigarettes).

It appears changes have been made in the application of the measure, notably with the effective application of a specific tax of CFA francs 150 per pack of cigarettes instead of the 300 CFA francs required by the finance law between 2018 and 2022. This followed unorthodox approaches by the TI to the services of the Ministry in charge of the Economy and Recovery.

It was decided in 2023 to apply an effective tax of 300 CFA francs per pack of cigarettes sold in Gabon, as initially planned in 2018, after a delay of 4 years.

4. UNNECESSARY INTERACTION

The Régie Gabonaise de Tabacs, a government body responsible for regulating the marketing of tobacco products, maintains covert interactions with CECA GADIS Group - which represents the interests of tobacco manufacturers.

5. TRANSPARENCY

According to the provisions of Article 5 in Decree 0286/PR/MSPSSN of May 17, 2016, on the prevention of interference by the TI in health policies in its relations between the State and the TI are covered by the principle of transparency.

Despite this, since the appointment of the current Minister for Health and Social Affairs, there has been a lack of transparency. Of particular note is the opaque nature of the terms of the audiences granted and the demands made by the TI to the Government.

In addition, during the "tobacco-free month" campaign organized by the national tobacco control program during the month of May 2023, we observed that high-ranking authorities, whose exact identity was not revealed, had ordered the removal from the campaign of all posters raising awareness of the harmful effects of new tobacco products, particularly electronic cigarettes.

These instructions undoubtedly reflect the strong influence of the TI on the Ministry of Health, which, through such behavior, encourages the promotion of e-cigarettes, particularly among the young people they are supposed to protect.



6. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

It is still common knowledge in Gabon that the head of the CECA GADIS Group also holds the position of High Commissioner to the Presidency of the Gabonese Republic. Furthermore, the interactions between the Régie Gabonaise des Tabacs, the state body in charge of regulating tobacco products, and CECA GADIS Group, the main importer of tobacco products, is a clear indication of the level of conflict of interest that still prevails in the country.

7. PREVENTIVE MEASURES

Interactions between public authorities and the TI are covered by Decree 0286/PR/MSPSSN of May 17, 2016, Decree on the prevention of TI interference in health policies. It is stated in Article 5 that “relations between the State and the Tobacco Industry are covered by the principle of transparency”.

The periodic submission of information on production, manufacturing, market share, marketing expenditure, revenues, and any other activity including lobbying, philanthropy, political contributions, and any other activity, is also covered, but only partially (cf. Article 9 of Decree 0286/PR/MSPSSN of May 17, 2016, on the prevention of tobacco industry interference in health policies in the Gabonese republic). While these legal measures are strong in theory, in practice they lack efficient implementation on the ground.