

Zambia



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Industry Participation in Policy Development

In March 2025, after the Tobacco Control Bill was finalized for tabling in Parliament, the Cabinet unexpectedly delayed it for further consultations, reportedly influenced by the Ministry of Commerce, Trade and Industry and allies of the tobacco industry (TI) under the Zambia Private Sector Alliance. These groups, including manufacturers, farmers' unions, and business councils, argued that the Bill would cause job losses, harm the economy, and overstep its mandate by regulating tobacco production. Their opposition gained momentum following a widely publicized statement from the Zambia Association of Manufacturers on 26 February 2025, warning of risks to employment and trade. Additionally, the Chipangali Council Chairperson, representing a key tobacco growing region, publicly rejected the Bill, citing potential negative impacts on farmers and the economy.

2. Industry CSR Activities

The government continued to endorse corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities linked to the TI in areas where companies operate. Senior government officials from Chipangali District, Eastern Province, such as the Provincial Permanent Secretary, officiated at the launch of Japan Tobacco International's (JTI) child labor awareness campaign, saying it helped address local issues. Officials have also continued supporting JTI's WeProsper and ARISE campaigns, which are presented as initiatives to raise community awareness on child labor and promote the importance of education for children.

In Western Province, the former Provincial Minister, now Minister of Health, has continued calling for community support for JTI's CSR activities, which include tree planting and construction of a bridge for a local community, signaling open government support for the TI.

3. Benefits to the Industry

Senior government officials at the ministerial level appear to have been persuaded to support the TI and its activities at the expense of tobacco control policies and public health. In April 2024, the Minister of Commerce, Trade and Industry publicly supported the tobacco business, arguing that there is no need to "kill" the industry and emphasizing its economic benefits.

The TI has been allowed unrestricted advertising, marketing, and sales of tobacco products, including new smoking and vaping devices. Products are also permitted for sale near educational facilities such as schools, colleges, and universities, which benefits the TI by expanding its sales among vulnerable groups.

4. Unnecessary Interaction

The government, through the Zambia Chamber of Commerce and Industry, organized a workshop in collaboration with the TI. The workshop aimed to build media capacity and provide information about developments in the tobacco market and its regulatory framework. The Chamber expressed its intention to foster a sustained relationship between the TI and the media.



5. Transparency

In the absence of a tobacco control law that complies with Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC, the Zambian government has no procedure in place to disclose meetings or interactions between senior officials and the TI. This requirement is among the proposed clauses in the Tobacco Control Bill. There is no registry of TI affiliated organizations or individuals acting on their behalf, such as lobbyists.

6. Conflict of Interest

The Zambian government does not prohibit contributions from the TI. There is no evidence of retired government officials being part of the TI, or current officials and their relatives holding positions in it. However, the absence of evidence does not confirm the absence of such cases, given the lack of transparency in TI operations.

7. Preventive Measures

The government of Zambia has not formulated, adopted, or implemented a code of conduct for public officials prescribing standards for their interactions with the TI. The government also does not require the TI to submit information on production, manufacturing, market share, marketing expenditures, revenues, lobbying, or political contributions. There is no program to consistently raise awareness within government departments on Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC. There is also no ban on TI sponsored study visits and other activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Enact the Tobacco Control Bill into law to align with obligations under the WHO FCTC.
2. Prohibit all CSR initiatives by the TI and prevent public officials and institutions from endorsing such activities.
3. Raise awareness of Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC among all government ministries, agencies, and policymakers.
4. Develop and adopt a code of conduct for all public officials to limit interactions with the TI to only when strictly necessary for regulation.