

Dominican Republic

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Summary of Findings

1. Industry participation in policy development

The tobacco industry is consulted by decision-making authorities in different areas of the government for public health policymaking. This participation ranges from suggestions in administrative resolutions to open and public participation in Dominican law.

2. Industry CSR activities

The tobacco industry generates contributions in multiple social areas in collaboration with the State. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) activities of the tobacco industry include the construction of schools, support for rural programs and women's empowerment, delivery of scholarships and rural development projects in traditionally tobacco farming communities and financing of university programs. In most of these events, representatives of the central government and/or local authorities were present.

3. Benefits to the industry

From this possible complicity, the tobacco industry receives a plethora of benefits without comparison, as the State is projected as a "tobacco-state" where the global tobacco trend suffers a regression and the industry receives benefits such as tax exemptions, State-backed international lobbying, local legislation in its favor and the ability to interfere in local health governance.

4. Unnecessary interaction

The president held a closed-door meeting with representatives of the tobacco industry. More than 50 producers participated in the meeting

with President, which also included other senior officials.

An agreement was signed between the Executive Branch and the main representatives of Philip Morris Dominicana to develop the technical capacities of the authorities to reduce illicit trade and smuggling of tobacco products. The Vice Minister of Free Zones was at the signing ceremony.

5. Transparency

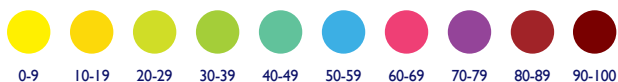
Because of the close relationship between government and industry, most common activities are available in the public domain. However, there are reports revealing private encounters that were not disclosed.

6. Conflict of interest

In the day-to-day relationship of government institutions and the tobacco industry, the conflicts of interest are more evident. From the Congress of the Republic, where industry has its key positions actively participating in the regulatory legislative process, several executive branch units serving as facilitators of the industry, to the Vice President of the republic who, at the time, served as general manager in tobacco companies in her family.

7. Preventive measures

The General Law on Free Access to Public Information Law 200-04 and Decree No. 130-05 secure transparency on government agencies' interaction with any type of industry interference. The government has not formulated or adopted any type of code of conduct for public officials about the interactions with the tobacco industry.



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Recommendations

In view of the close link between state institutions and the tobacco industry as well as our country’s refusal to comply with the World Health Organization (WHO) FCTC, we see very little opportunity to prevent tobacco industry interference in public policies. However, we believe that PAHO/WHO can motivate the government to at least be as far away from tobacco industry interests as possible. Following this line of thought, here are some recommendations:

1. The Ministry of Health draw up a code of conduct based on surveillance for the relationship between the government and the industry, with an emphasis on health, education, sports and minors.
2. Universities and civil society institutions generate research on industry interference in public policies and legislation, as well as on their corporate responsibility programs.
3. Consolidate the Dominican Anti-Smoking Alliance so that it can be the civil society organization that monitors the relationship between the industry and the government.
4. Development of a follow-up plan to the relationship between the industry and the government ranging from public, national and international denunciation to submission to the competent courts for violation of laws.