

Iran



SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

1. Industry Participation in Policy Development

The National Tobacco Control Law and its bylaws prohibit any form of support from tobacco manufacturers for government programs; therefore, the tobacco industry (TI) is barred from participating in policy development. Additionally, the TI is not included in the government delegation to any WHO FCTC-related meetings.

2. Industry CSR Activities

The law bans tobacco-related corporate social responsibility (CSR), and there are no instances of government participation or collaboration reported during the review period.

3. Benefits to the Industry

Although the government has not provided direct benefits to the TI, regulatory loopholes allow the industry to exploit gaps in enforcement, particularly in tobacco taxation. Despite Iran being under heavy economic sanctions in recent years, a significant share of foreign investment was directed toward the TI with the approval of the Ministry of Industry, Mine, and Trade. Additionally, tax exemptions in the budget law further created opportunities for the industry to benefit financially.

4. Unnecessary Interaction

Top-level government officials do not attend any tobacco-related functions and do not foster relationships with the TI.

5. Transparency

It is unclear whether tobacco companies submit the mandatory reports to the National Tobacco Control Headquarter or whether these reports are shared with the tobacco control committee. Furthermore, the lack of transparency and the absence of published consumption statistics have enabled the TI to increase production without sufficient oversight.

6. Conflict of Interest

The National Tobacco Control Law does not allow any contributions from the TI or any entities working to further its interests. Following the privatization of the Iranian Tobacco Company, half of its shares were acquired by a governmental pension fund under the Ministry of Cooperatives, Labour, and Social Welfare. As the ministry appoints the board of directors of this company, this arrangement risks negatively influencing the enforcement of national tobacco control policies.

7. Preventive Measures

The TI is not permitted to attend or engage in interactions with government officials or receive support for its plans. The government has also implemented a policy prohibiting the acceptance of all forms of contributions or gifts from the TI. According to the government's official report, awareness-raising activities on Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC, TI interference, and the use of front groups are conducted across branches of government.



RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Transfer all shares of the Iranian Tobacco Company to the private sector to eliminate conflicts of interest and reduce lobbying influence, enabling the National Tobacco Planning and Supervision Center to effectively carry out its role in tobacco control policymaking.
2. Publish timely and comprehensive information on tobacco production, importation, exportation, lobbyists, and affiliated organizations in a publicly accessible system supervised by the National Tobacco Control Headquarter, and ensure that meetings and other mandated duties are carried out in line with the Comprehensive National Tobacco Control Law.
3. Develop and implement a code of conduct to regulate interactions between the government and the TI, ensuring transparency and limiting engagement to situations that are strictly necessary.