**REPORT: Big Tobacco intensifies interference in public policymaking across Latin America and Caribbean**Regional Index ranks 19 countries; shows worsening trend ahead of global tobacco treaty talks

**Quito, Ecuador and Bangkok, Thailand** – Powerful tobacco corporations have increased their influence on governments across Latin America and the Caribbean, hindering efforts to reduce tobacco use and hold the tobacco industry (TI) accountable for its harms, according to a new report.

The [2023 Regional Tobacco Industry Interference Index](https://globaltobaccoindex.org/regions/latin-america), the third in its series, evaluates countries’ efforts to protect public health policies from TI interests as mandated by [Article 5.3](https://fctc.who.int/es/publications/9241591013) of [the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC)](https://fctc.who.int/publications/m/item/guidelines-for-implementation-of-article-5.3). It utilized civil society reports based on publicly available information on tobacco industry interference in countries and their respective governments, covering the period of April 2021 to March 2023. The index is produced by [Corporate Accountability](https://corporateaccountability.org/) and the [Global Center for Good Governance in Tobacco Control](https://ggtc.world/) (GGTC), with the support of Bloomberg Philanthropies.

Of the 19 countries analyzed, only 6 improved their score (**Panama, Nicaragua, Mexico, Ecuador, Guatemala and Argentina**) and one held steady **(Venezuela)** compared to [the last index in 2021](https://globaltobaccoindex.org/regions/latin-america). The remaining 11 countries showed deterioration in their efforts to safeguard policymaking from TI interference (**Costa Rica, Peru, Chile, El Salvador, Uruguay, Brazil, Bolivia, Honduras, Paraguay, Colombia and Dominican Republic**). One country (**Jamaica**) was included in the index for the first time.

“More countries deteriorated in Latin America compared to countries that improved. Big Tobacco wants to expand its market in large Latin American countries, especially for the sale of e-cigarettes and new tobacco products, so they have increased their interference,” said **Laura Salgado, Head of Campaign and Partnership at GGTC.** “They also target countries with strong tobacco control measures such as Uruguay, which is now facing an onslaught of interference. But the region has strong political will. They can address tobacco control because in the past they demonstrated strong political will to do so.”

Countries were scored on a **scale of 0 to 100**, with higher scores indicating greater tobacco industry interference. Key findings include:

* **Panama**, the host country of the upcoming [WHO FCTC Conference of the Parties (COP10) and the third Meeting of the Parties (MOP3)](https://fctc.who.int/newsroom/news/item/27-11-2023-dates-announced-for-the-resumed-in-person-sessions-of-cop10-and-mop3), ranked best among the group, followed by **Nicaragua, Jamaica,** and **Mexico.**
* The **Dominican Republic** ranked worst for the second year in a row – both in the region and [globally](http://exposetobacco.org/global-index/) – with a maximum interference score of 100 out of 100.
* **Costa Rica**, **Honduras**, and **Uruguay** showed the worst deterioration since 2021, while **Panama** improved the most.

“At UNDP we’re using the findings of the Index to shape [tobacco control investment cases](https://fctc.who.int/who-fctc/development-assistance/investment-cases). We’ve tracked that addressing industry interference is now prioritized in four times as many investment cases now as in 2018. But we still have work to do to help countries protect their health policies from industry interference,” said **Dudley Tarlton, Programme Specialist United Nations Developing Programme (UNDP).**

**No country analyzed was immune to tobacco industry efforts to influence policy and policymakers to its benefit**, with tactics including lobbying, funding scientific studies, making political contributions, recruiting senior government officials, and pushing “corporate social responsibility” initiatives such as cigarette butt clean-ups.

“Big Tobacco uses ‘corporate social responsibility’ in an attempt to clean up its image while continuing its dirty business as usual. The industry’s meager handouts are nothing compared to the cost of the damages they wreak on people and the planet, nor the billions in profits they make every year,” said **Daniel Dorado, Tobacco Campaign Director at Corporate Accountability.** “Governments need to use every tool they have, particularly Article 19 of the WHO FCTC or the liability provision, to [make Big Tobacco pay](https://www.makebigtobaccopay.org/take-action) for societal costs of its dangerous products.”

**There is an urgent need to counter TI interference, as 2023 and 2024 present important opportunities for tobacco control efforts.** The COP10 and MOP3, originally scheduled for November 2023, will [take place in Panama from February 5 to 15](https://fctc.who.int/newsroom/news/item/27-11-2023-dates-announced-for-the-resumed-in-person-sessions-of-cop10-and-mop3). At the global level, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) began developing in November 2022 an international, legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, which will be [key to controlling the production of highly polluting plastics contained in cigarette filters, electronic cigarettes, and vaping products](https://ggtc.world/actions/campaigns/petitions/stop-tobacco-pollution-alliance).

“The tobacco industry profits from a product that kills, impoverishes people and countries, and destroys the environment. It is an industry that thrives by attracting new users and keeping them addicted, even if it means killing almost half of them. Despite these cruel realties, industry efforts to undermine tobacco control never cease. The Global Tobacco Index chronicles the industry’s appalling tactics. Only the comprehensive implementation of the WHO FCTC, particularly Article 5.3 and its Guidelines for implementation, will stop the problem,” said **Dr. Adriana Blanco Marquizo, Head of the WHO FCTC Convention Secretariat.**

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[***Corporate Accountability***](https://corporateaccountability.org/who-we-are/) *is a non-governmental organization that prevents transnational corporations from devastating democracy, violating human rights, and destroying our planet.*

[***The Global Center for Good Governance in Tobacco Control (GGTC***](https://ggtc.world/)***)*** *collaborates with advocates, governments, and institutions worldwide to tackle the single greatest obstacle in tobacco control implementation: tobacco industry interference. Its mission is to equip change-makers with cutting-edge strategies and tools to ensure that the health of millions around the world would not suffer at the hands of the tobacco industry.*