

# Maldives



## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

### 1. Industry Participation in Policy Development

During the reporting period, the government of Maldives maintained a firm stance against tobacco industry (TI) interference by refusing offers of assistance, collaboration, or policy input from the TI or its affiliates. It does not allow TI involvement in drafting laws or participation in official delegations, such as at COP10, where only public health and economic officials were accredited. While the Tobacco Control Board includes a business sector representative, members are required to pledge no conflicts of interest and undergo a vetting process governed by the Board's constitution.

Reflecting its strengthened tobacco control agenda, the government is drafting a comprehensive master plan targeting a smoke-free society and a generational smoking ban. In a significant development, Parliament passed a bill in May 2025 banning the import, production, and sale of tobacco products to individuals born after 1 January 2009, effectively enacting a generational ban and positioning the Maldives as one of the first countries to adopt such legislation.

### 2. Industry CSR Activities

The Maldives' Tobacco Control Act (Law No. 15/2010) prohibits all forms of tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship in line with WHO FCTC guidelines, thereby shielding public health policies from TI influence. During the reporting period, there was no evidence of government or official involvement in TI-sponsored partnerships or

CSR activities. Tobacco sponsorship remains banned, and officials are required to declare potential conflicts of interest, although the possibility of indirect influence cannot be entirely ruled out.

### 3. Benefits to the Industry

In 2024, the Maldives strengthened its tobacco control measures significantly through a series of legal and economic reforms. These included a nationwide ban on the production of tobacco products and increased import duties, raising cigarette tariffs to 50 percent of the import value plus MVR 8 per stick. The government eliminated all duty exemptions for tobacco-related goods and maintained a strict stance against offering subsidies or tax breaks to the TI.

As of 2024, all forms of e-cigarettes and vaping products have been banned in the Maldives. These products are no longer allowed to be imported, sold, or used. The President also announced plans for a generational smoking ban, urging tobacco traders to shift to other sectors. Despite a brief attempt to restrict tourist duty-free tobacco allowances to one opened pack, the government reinstated the standard allowance of 200 cigarettes after public feedback.

### 4. Unnecessary Interaction

While the Maldives has formal procedures for disclosing interactions with the TI under Articles 26 and 27 of the Tobacco Control Act (Law No. 15/2010), these are not effectively implemented in practice, as there is no public disclosure of meetings with tobacco distributors or access to industry-related information.



Recent amendments to the law now require five-year licensing for tobacco importers, exporters, and retailers, but these do not amount to a full registration or disclosure system for TI entities and affiliates. There are no specific rules for the registration or transparency of individuals, lobbyists, or organizations acting on behalf of the TI.

## 5. Transparency

During the reporting period, there was no evidence that high-level government officials in the Maldives met with or maintained relations with tobacco companies, including attending events or functions sponsored by the TI or its affiliates. Similarly, there were no reported instances of the government accepting assistance from the TI in enforcing tobacco control measures such as anti-smuggling operations, implementation of smoke-free policies, or restrictions on sales to minors. More broadly, there was also no indication that the government accepted, supported, endorsed, or entered into partnerships or formal agreements with the TI in any form.

## 6. Conflict of Interest

The Maldives currently lacks a formal policy prohibiting the acceptance of contributions or gifts from the TI, such as monetary support, study visit invitations, or policy drafts

offered to government entities or officials. While general anti-corruption frameworks exist, including the Anti-Corruption Commission Act (Act No. 13/2008), these do not explicitly address TI interactions or potential conflicts of interest.

There is no record of current officials or their relatives holding positions in the TI; however, past instances show that senior government officials had ties to tobacco businesses, and there are no safeguards in place to prevent similar situations. Moreover, some government officials have been linked to tobacco importation or trading activities, with influence extending across both health and non-health sectors.

## 7. Preventive Measures

The Maldives has taken steps to enhance transparency in tobacco control through Articles 26 and 27 of the Tobacco Control Act (Law No. 15/2010), which require public disclosure and reporting to the Ministry of Health on TI activities. However, despite these mechanisms being in place, information is not regularly published, revealing a gap in implementation.

While a general code of conduct governs civil servants and political appointees, no specific policy addresses interactions with the TI or conflicts of interest arising from them.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Establish a specific code of conduct addressing TI interference.
2. Implement and regularly publish a transparent disclosure mechanism.
3. Create a mandatory registry of TI entities and representatives.
4. Institutionalize nationwide public awareness and capacity-building programs.