

WHO Summit: Censorship Continues

Geneva, November 4, 2016 – A worrying culture of censorship is emerging behind the scenes of the seventh session of the Conference of the Parties (COP7) to the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), taking place in Greater Noida, India from November 7 to 12.

Those journalists and members of the public who were thrown out of the public gallery at COP6 (Moscow) in 2014 will not be fooled by the FCTC Secretariat's new, supposedly transparent accreditation process for COP7. Proposals to be discussed at the summit, which if adopted will formalize censorship practices in WHO meetings, contain plans for the compulsory screening of media attendees and any individual or organization who directly or indirectly consults with the tobacco industry, including government representatives and experts with legitimate credentials¹.

Michiel Reerink, Global Regulatory Strategy Vice President at JTI, said: "The COP is promoting a culture of exclusion and secrecy, where debates are held behind closed doors. This contradicts the fundamental principles of international law. The fact that this is happening in the largest democracy on the planet is a double insult, as individual rights are held dear there".

The extent of the COP's lack of transparency and accountability is highlighted in a recently published report by Mr. Jean-Claude Piris, an expert in international public law. The report, commissioned by JTI and sent to the WHO Director General, the FCTC Convention Secretariat and the Bureau of COP, concludes that following COP6's decision to change the Rules of Procedure behind closed doors, there is an opportunity and a need to improve transparency in

¹ Maximizing transparency of Parties' delegations, intergovernmental organizations, nongovernmental organizations and civil society groups during sessions of the COP and meetings of its subsidiary, bodies, Report by the Convention Secretariat, Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, July 13, 2016 : http://www.who.int/fctc/cop/cop7/FCTC_COP_7_30_EN.pdf?ua=1

how the FCTC COP works.² According to Mr. Piris' report, these rules discriminate against the accreditation of observers, restrict the access to key documents, and allow no mechanism for complaint.

This is in stark contrast with the decision-making of COP22 on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change ('UNFCCC') which will be held in Marrakech from November 7 to 18, where a policy of disclosure and openness has been adopted and representatives of businesses, alongside public policy officials, are invited to play their role in finding workable solutions³.

At COP7, delegations predominantly led by public health officials will be discussing issues which go beyond their competences such as Agricultural practices, Trade and Investment, Dispute Settlement and Liability – “topics that should be debated by the appropriate experts in governments”, emphasizes Mr. Reerink.

Michiel Reerink concludes: "The FCTC COP has lost sight of its aim to improve the world's health, and has instead become ideology-driven, taking on a fight against businesses, tobacco growers, vapers and smokers, when it should open itself up to scrutiny and hear a diverse range of views. It has become an expensive, tax-payer funded closed shop".

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For further information, please contact:

Marie-Hélène Dubé
External Communications Director
Phone: +41 22 703 0291
pressoffice@jti.com

JTI, a member of the Japan Tobacco Group of Companies, is a leading international tobacco manufacturer. It markets global brands such as Winston, Camel, Mevius and LD. JTI is a global player in the e-cigarette market with E-Lites and Logic, and has been present in the heated tobacco sector with Ploom since 2011. Headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, and with operations in more than 120 countries, JTI employs around 26,000 employees worldwide. Its core revenue in the fiscal year ended December 31, 2015, was USD 10.3 billion. For more information, visit www.jti.com.

² Transparency and Accountability and the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, Jean-Claude Piris, April 8, 2016: http://www.jti.com/files/9014/6652/1190/Transparency_and_Accountability_and_the_Framework_Convention_on_Tobacco_....pdf

³ “Companies contribute directly or indirectly to global warming and are therefore naturally key actors in developing efficient solutions to stay below the limit in global temperature rise of between +1.5 and 2°C. They provide solutions through innovation and emissions reduction and climate change adaptation technologies in all of the areas covered by the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)”: <http://www.cop22.ma/en/i-am-company>