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35 organisations from 23 African countries call for the removal of Philip Morris International (PMI) from all engagements related to the Africa Trade & Customs Week Summit 2022

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35 organisations from 23 African countries have denounced the brandishing of Philip Morris International (PMI) as one of the sponsors of the **AFRICA TRADE & CUSTOMS WEEK SUMMIT 2022**, and called for the withdrawal of the tobacco multinational from all engagements related to the summit which is scheduled to take place from November 7 to November 9, 2022, in Sandton, Johannesburg, South Africa.

In a petition dated 21 October 2022, the organisations note that they “are concerned by this sponsorship because it is a total violation of the World Health Organization’s Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the first international treaty negotiated under the auspices of WHO in response to the globalization of the tobacco epidemic, and an evidence-based treaty that reaffirms the right of all people to the highest standard of health. It is also a violation of South Africa’s current legislation on tobacco control, the Tobacco Products Control Act 83 of 1993 (as amended).”

The petition states that as a Party to the FCTC, South Africa is bound to respect the Guidelines for implementation of Article 5.3 of the Convention which highlights that Parties should not accept, support or endorse the tobacco industry organizing, promoting, participating in, or performing, youth, public education or any initiatives that are directly or indirectly related to tobacco control. It also spotlights South Africa’s current legislation which states that “No manufacturer, importer, distributor or retailer of tobacco products shall organise or promote any organised activity that is to take place in whole or in part in the Republic, nor make any financial contribution to any organised activity that is to take place, or is taking place, or has taken place in whole or in part in the Republic.”

The petition brings to light the **model policy for agencies of the United Nations system on preventing tobacco industry interference**, which requires the United Nations system, including the intergovernmental agencies that are observers to COP and members of the UN Inter Agency Task Force to “Reject partnerships, joint programs, non-binding or non-enforceable agreements and any other voluntary arrangements with the tobacco industry.” As such, it calls on organisations that are covered by this policy and are expected to intervene during the **AFRICA TRADE & CUSTOMS WEEK SUMMIT** to withdraw their engagement if Philip Morris International remains connected in any way to the summit. These organisations are:

- World Customs Organization
- United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
- World Trade Organization

- International Trade Centre
- International Finance Corporation (World Bank Group)
- United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

Noting that this occurs at a time when South Africa's tobacco control bill is heading to parliament for vote into law, the 35 organisations suspect that the move by Philip Morris International to sponsor such a major summit is a strategy to gain access to the competent revenue services to influence government policy. They call on South Africa to rather ensure effective implementation of the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products, which lays down steps to effectively track and trace the movement of tobacco products across borders. South Africa has not progressed with implementation of the Protocol which it signed in 2013.

[View and download the petition.](#)

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The African Tobacco Control Alliance (ATCA) is a non-profit, non-political Pan-African network of civil society organizations headquartered in Lome, Togo. With membership in 39 countries, ATCA is dedicated to promoting public health and curbing the tobacco epidemic in the continent. The alliance is an Observer to WHO-FCTC Conference of Parties. It has a Special Consultative Status with the UN ECOSOC and is certified with the equivalence of a US Public Charity organization.