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Côte d'Ivoire's Historic Plain Packaging Launch Sets a Powerful Example for Africa's Tobacco Control Future

ATCA Statement

Lome, 14 August 2026

The African Tobacco Control Alliance (ATCA) extends heartfelt congratulations to the Government and people of Côte d'Ivoire as the country marks the official commencement of plain packaging requirements for tobacco products.

With this milestone that took effect this August 2026, Côte d'Ivoire proudly joins Mauritius as one of only two African nations to implement standardized plain packaging. This is an accomplishment that reflects strong national commitment to protecting public health and future generations.

ATCA acknowledges the dedication of Côte d'Ivoire government, civil society organizations, and local public health champions whose collective efforts have transformed this policy into visible action. Early reports showing compliant, standardized packs in some local markets highlight the country's impressive momentum and readiness for full compliance.

Importantly, the Ivorian Ministry of Trade, Industry and Handicrafts has issued key regulations establishing a national system for tracking, tracing, and fiscal verification of tobacco products. The recent ministerial directives significantly amplify the impact of plain packaging by establishing tight operational control over the entire supply chain, and mandating formal government accreditation across all levels, from manufacturing and transit to wholesale and retail of tobacco products. By so doing, the government is restricting market access solely to authorized, compliant operators. This rigorous oversight closes loopholes for illicit trade, prevents non-standardized products from entering distribution channels, and equips enforcement agencies with the immediate legal power to deny or revoke business licenses for non-compliance.

Furthermore, by coupling standardized packaging with mandatory tracking, tracing, and strict submission deadlines under an independent Tobacco Commission, Côte d'Ivoire diminishes tobacco industry attempts to delay compliance or bypass graphic health warnings. The country is demonstrating that true tobacco control requires combining product-level measures with strict supply chain oversight.

By advancing plain packaging in alignment with Articles 11 and 13 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), Côte d'Ivoire sets an inspiring example for Africa. This evidence-based measure reduces product appeal, strengthens health warnings, and protects young people from tobacco addiction.

As Côte d'Ivoire enters the three-month transitional period for clearing legacy stock, ATCA commends the country's proactive approach and encourages continued attentiveness throughout this phase. Given

the tobacco industry's well-documented attempts to weaken similar measures globally, ATCA expresses confidence in Côte d'Ivoire's enforcement bodies, customs officials, and market inspectors as they continue their diligent work to uphold the integrity of this policy. Their leadership is essential to ensuring that compliant products remain the norm and that the transition proceeds smoothly nationwide.

ATCA celebrates Côte d'Ivoire's leadership and encourages other African nations to draw inspiration from this milestone. The continent stands at a pivotal moment, and Côte d'Ivoire's achievement demonstrates how political will, collaboration, and public health commitment can overcome tobacco industry pressure.

We are proud to have accompanied our CSO members in Cote d'Ivoire to reach this milestone, and we remain committed to supporting the Ivorian government and civil society partners as they continue advancing this life-saving policy and reinforcing Africa's collective progress in tobacco control.

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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, and Meeting of the Parties (MOP) of the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products. It has a Special Consultative Status with the UN ECOSOC, it is certified with the equivalence of a US Public Charity organization, and it is accredited as a regional non-state actor with WHO AFRO.