CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY INTERNATIONAL
CHALLENGING ABUSE, PROTECTING PEOPLE
formerly Infact

CENTRAL
Campaign Headquarters
10 Milk Street, Suite 610
Boston, MA 02108
Tel: 617.695.2525
Fax: 617.695.2626

OFFICES
West Coast
San Francisco, CA
Seattle, WA
Latin America
Bogotá, Colombia

www.StopCorporateAbuse.org • info@stopcorporateabuse.org

MINISTRY OF HEALTH OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
Vilnius str. 33
LT-01506 Vilnius, Lithuania
ministerija@sam.lt, vytenis.andriukaitis@lrs.lt
www.sam.lt

Dear Minister Andriukaitis,

On behalf of Corporate Accountability International, an international non-governmental organization based in the United States, I am writing as it has come to our attention that the government of Lithuania recently received correspondence from Members of the United States Congress and trade associations like the US Chamber of Commerce regarding the European Tobacco Products Directive (TPD) and the trade agreement being negotiated between the European Union and the United States. During this critical stage in the development of the TPD, we urge you to stand strong against any such interference driven by the tobacco industry and those who work to further its interests to undermine and weaken the life-saving potential of this milestone for the health of Europeans.

For 35 years, Corporate Accountability International has waged and won campaigns to save lives and protect people's health, the environment, and human rights by challenging corporate abuses and holding transnational corporations accountable. Corporate Accountability International is officially accredited with the World Health Organization (WHO) and the Conference of the Parties to the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and has Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

Every year, tobacco kills nearly six million people, remaining the largest preventable cause of death on the planet. Lithuania and the EU are two of 177 Parties to the FCTC, the world's first public health treaty, which enshrines the most effective tobacco control measures and represents nearly 90% of the world's population. If fully implemented, the FCTC will save 200 million lives by 2050.

As you know, the TPD is a landmark effort by the EU to bring its Member States into compliance with its obligations under the FCTC and could protect millions of Europeans from tobacco's highly addictive and deadly effects.

The single greatest threat to the life-saving potential of the FCTC and the TPD is the tobacco industry's efforts to undermine the implementation of the treaty's measures. The tobacco industry's business model relies on exporting this epidemic from the world's wealthiest countries to the most economically disadvantaged. The letter that you received is a clear example of how this deadly industry uses its political and economic clout to thwart life-saving public health policies.

That is why Parties included a critical provision in the FCTC - Article 5.3 - which states that the tobacco industry has an irreconcilable conflict of interest with public health and "requires the Parties to act to protect their public health policies from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry in accordance with national law." The article is the backbone of the treaty – the treaty cannot succeed if industry interference is not halted.

The letter you received from trade associations and Members of Congress is indicative of how the tobacco industry mobilizes special interests to advance its deadly agenda and intimidate

policymakers. For example, all major US-based tobacco corporations are members of the US Chamber of Commerce, noted in the letter, which has a long history of using its influence to undermine the advancement of public health policies in the US and around the world. These trade associations do not represent the views of the American public, which overwhelmingly supports strong tobacco control measures, like those enshrined in the FCTC and the TPD.

The Members of Congress who signed onto a similar letter addressed to the Ambassador of the European Union to the United States dated May 7, 2013 also receive a disproportionate number and amount of political contributions from the tobacco industry. Senator Mitch McConnell, for example, received $32,250 from the tobacco industry in 2012, and has a history of advocating for the interests of the tobacco industry.

We were encouraged by the Ambassador's response and urge you to respond similarly, making it clear that the EU will include in the TPD what is best for public health, not Big Tobacco profits.

Lastly, the tobacco industry also has a long history of using trade and investment agreements to undermine tobacco control measures, even going so far as to use trade as grounds to litigate directly against countries implementing public health measures recommended by the FCTC like graphic health warnings for cigarette packages, plain packaging for tobacco, and bans on tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship.

The industry advances these arguments despite the fact that the FCTC, in its preamble, recognizes Parties' right to prioritize health concerns over trade. The arguments used by the tobacco industry and its allies regarding trade, such as those contained in the letter you received, are unfounded and designed to intimidate. This has become increasingly clear as countries like Norway, Australia, and South Africa have issued rulings that recognize the fact that these countries' right to protect public health should be prioritized over the profits of an industry whose products kill up to half of their users.

We urge you to fulfill your obligations under Article 5.3 of the FCTC and stand up for public health over the profits of one of the deadliest and most deceptive industries on the planet. We stand ready to support you and your government to stand up for public health and expose and challenge tobacco industry interference with the TPD.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at 617-695-2525 or jstewart@stopcorporateabuse.org at your convenience for further information.

Sincerely,

John Stewart
Director, Challenge Big Tobacco
Corporate Accountability International

CC:

MINISTRY OF ECONOMY OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
Gedimino ave. 38, LT-01104 Vilnius, Lithuania
kanc@ukmin.lt
www.ukmin.lt

MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
J. Tumo-Vaižganto str. 2, LT-01511 Vilnius, Lithuania
urm@urm.lt
www.urm.lt

SEIMAS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA
Gedimino ave. 53, Vilnius, Lithuania.
priim@lrs.lt
www.lrs.lt