



Health groups unite to condemn BAT event on social reporting in the European Parliament

Brussels Wednesday 10 January 2007

Some of Europe's leading health organisations today criticised a meeting called by British American Tobacco to sell its social reporting strategy in the European Parliament.

Speaking on behalf of the Smokefree Partnership, Fiona Godfrey said, "BAT can come to Brussels and spin a nice story on social reporting to the European Parliament and policy makers. But this story hides a catalogue of breaches of tobacco legislation, abuse of basic employment rights, environmental degradation and devastating damage to the health of BAT's consumers and its tobacco workers around the world.¹ BAT's fantasies on social reporting just don't belong in the European Parliament."

Susanne Logstrup representing the European Heart Network said, "We are deeply dismayed that BAT's meeting on Corporate Social Responsibility takes place in the European Parliament – but heartened that respected members of the Parliament will not support the event. We remain concerned by the way tobacco companies seem to be attempting to influence decision makers throughout Europe."

Luk Joossens speaking on behalf of the European Cancer Leagues added: "BAT have issued several legal challenges in the European Court of Justice and in other EU countries to the 2001 EC Tobacco Products Directive² and other pieces of EU tobacco legislation. They continue to breach laws aimed at reducing the harm caused by tobacco around the world.³ We just don't understand how the European Parliament can watch its own laws being repeatedly challenged and ignored by BAT and then give them a platform to say how socially responsible they are. It's totally illogical."

¹ See BAT's Big Wheeze, ASH UK, Friends of the Earth, Christian Aid London, 2004:
<http://www.christian-aid.org.uk/indepth/404bat/batbigwheeze.pdf>

² Directive 2003/33/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 26 May 2003 on the approximation of the laws, regulations and administrative provisions of the Member States relating to the advertising and sponsorship of tobacco products; http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/site/en/oj/2003/l_152/l_15220030620en00160019.pdf

³ <http://www.acc.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/773644>
<http://www.acc.gov.au/content/index.phtml/itemId/683582>

Mackenzie R, Collin J, Sriwongcharoen K. Thailand--lighting up a dark market: British American tobacco, sports sponsorship and the circumvention of legislation.
Journal of Epidemiology and Community Health 2007;61:28-33

But the health organisations involved added that they expect the event to be a flop. “BAT have tried this elsewhere around the world including in France and found that stakeholders just don’t want to engage with a company with BAT’s track record”, said Emmanuelle Beguinot Director of the CNCT (Comite national Contre le Tabac) in France.

Notes to Editors

1. The meeting will take place in the European Parliament in Brussels on 10 January 2007.
2. The Smoke Free Partnership is a new strategic, independent and flexible partnership between the European Respiratory Society (ERS at www.ersnet.org), Cancer Research UK (CR-UK at www.cancerresearchuk.org) and the Institut National du Cancer (INCa at www.e-cancer.fr). It aims to promote tobacco control advocacy and policy research at EU and national levels in collaboration with other EU health organisations and EU tobacco control networks.
www.ersnet.org
3. The European Heart Network plays a leading role in the prevention and reduction of cardiovascular disease through advocacy, networking and education so that it is no longer a major cause of premature death and disability throughout Europe
www.ehnheart.org
4. The Comité National Contre le Tabagisme (French Committee Against Smoking) is an NGOs founded in 1868. In the framework of its different missions (communication, prevention, protection from passive smoking, etc.), the association engages legal actions especially against the tobacco industry to make sure that the legislation concerning tobacco control is respected.
5. The European Public Health Alliance (EPHA) represents over 90 non-governmental and other not-for-profit organisations working on health and health related issues in Europe. EPHA aims to promote and protect the health interests of all people living in Europe and to strengthen the dialogue between the EU institutions, citizens and NGOs in support of healthy public policies.
www.eph.org
6. ECL is a not-for-profit association. Its objectives are to improve communication, to promote, enhance and co-ordinate collaboration between European Leagues/societies and to foster fruitful activities between European Cancer Leagues and organisations, in order to reduce the growing burden in Europe.

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