

Press Release:

The Framework Convention Alliance (FCA) launched the third report of the Tobacco Industry Interference Index in Jordan, as part of the Global Tobacco Industry Interference Index Report. The report measures efforts by governments to address tobacco industry interference. This report is based on publicly available information on tobacco industry interference in countries and their respective governments' responses to these interferences. Countries are ranked according to total scores provided by civil society groups. The lower the score, the lower the overall level of interference.

The report for the year 2021, was prepared in partnership with the Ministry of Health, the World Health Organization, the King Hussein Cancer Center, the Greater Amman Municipality, Jordan Customs and a number of civil society organizations. The total score was 78/100, which is considered a very high number and among the highest in the world.

Princess Dina stated that the biggest obstacle and threat to governments' tobacco control policies are vested interests and the interference of the tobacco industry. Governments need to be aware of their deception, lies and tactics. In addition, the tobacco industry has only one goal, which is to exploit economically weak governments and their citizens to earn more money while people get sicker and governments and individuals get poorer.

The Executive Director of the Framework Convention Alliance, Leslie Rae Ferat, highlighted that we still have a lot of work to do to keep pressure on governments for full implementation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). She added that we need to make sure that Governments respect Article 5.3 of the FCTC and its implementation guidelines. The tobacco industry cannot interfere in places where it does not belong, such as national policy making. It is concerning that Jordan faces a significant threat from high levels of interference from the tobacco industry and its allies. She stressed the need for joint cooperation between governmental and non-governmental institutions to defend the tobacco control agenda and pressure decision-makers to confront the efforts of the tobacco industry and support the implementation of Article 5.3 of the FCTC.

Mawya Al-Zawawi, the principal researcher responsible for preparing the report, spoke about the role of governments in cooperating with civil society associations and help them access information. She mentioned that the difficulty of accessing information is one of the most important obstacles facing the report. In addition, the reluctance of officials at times to talk about the role and impact of the interference of tobacco companies in health policies. This can be attributed to several reasons, namely the pressure and lobby of tobacco companies on decision-makers, and the contribution of tobacco products to a significant part of the treasury revenue through taxes imposed on its products. However, these deceptions are false as shown by the report of the Ministry of Health published in cooperation with the World Health Organization in 2019 that confirmed that Jordan incurs more than 1.6 billion JOD in annual

losses as a result of tobacco smoking, while they make in revenue nearly 900 million JOD. This results in a total loss of 700 million JOD annually.

What did the report show?

1- Progression of the activities of tobacco companies. Their relations with various government institutions are evident, whether by participating directly in meetings concerning decisions related to tobacco products, indirectly through partners, front groups and representatives from several parties, participating in various social responsibility activities in the local community, being recognized and awarded for their influence and accomplishments, and being allowed and supported to expand their businesses.

2- The prominence of the activity and role of the Ministry of Health in combating tobacco and seeking to implement Article 5.3 of the FCTC.

3- The result of the report is a total score of 78/100, compared to 77/100 in 2020, and 79/100 in 2021.