



**ADIC PRESS RELEASE**

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**Insights into the Impact of Tobacco Industry Interference on Sri Lanka's Tobacco Control Efforts:  
Launch of the Global and Sri Lankan Tobacco Industry Interference (TII) Index.**

Despite Sri Lanka's long-standing commitment to tobacco control, tobacco use remains a serious and persistent public health challenge. Approximately 1.5 million adults smoke in Sri Lanka, contributing to nearly 50 tobacco-related deaths every day. Additionally, non-communicable diseases (NCDs) account for 83% of all deaths in the country, with tobacco use being one of the four major risk factors, posing a significant burden on the national healthcare system. Sri Lankans spend an estimated LKR 520 million daily on cigarettes, exacerbating financial hardships for individuals, families, and communities. Amid these challenges, the tobacco industry continues to deploy deceptive, unethical, and evolving strategies to sustain its market presence and replace their declining consumer base, specifically targeting youth, children, non-smokers, and other vulnerable populations, directly undermining public health goals.

Today, the Alcohol and Drug Information Centre (ADIC), together with the Global Centre for Good Governance in Tobacco Control (GGTC), launched the Global and Sri Lankan Tobacco Industry Interference (TII) Index, shedding light on how tobacco industry strategies continue to affect public health policies and tobacco control efforts in Sri Lanka.

State Parties to the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) are obligated to protect their health policies by using Article 5.3 and its implementing guidelines, which empowers them to protect public health policies from commercial and other vested interests. The TII Index, an initiative launched in 2019, is a civil society review of how governments implement the measures outlined under Article 5.3 of WHO FCTC and has been conducted once every two years since its inception. The Global TII Index 2025 surveyed 100 countries in the Eastern Mediterranean region, the Americas, Europe, South and Southeast Asia and the Western Pacific region, and is based on publicly available information on tobacco industry interference in countries and their respective governments' responses to this interference, during the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2023 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2025.

According to the Global TII Index 2025, Sri Lanka is ranked 17<sup>th</sup>, with a score of 45, falling within the 40–49 score range, where a lower score reflects stronger performance. Notably, Sri Lanka's overall score has deteriorated by three points compared to year 2023, indicating an increase in tobacco industry interference. This deterioration is mainly attributed to the following factors identified under the Global Index.

- Conflict of Interest: Government officials and tobacco industry links
  - Senior government officials and relatives hold roles in the tobacco industry, including board and consultancy positions.

- Senior government officials hold or have held leadership roles in tobacco companies, raising serious conflict-of-interest concerns.
- Greenwashing practices to improve the tobacco industry's unethical image under the guise of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Due to persistent interference by the tobacco industry, the implementation of the following proposed policy priorities has been significantly delayed, with some pending since 2019, undermining national tobacco control efforts and placing hard-won public health gains achieved over the years at serious risk.

- Developing a scientific tax system to ensure the accurate collection of tobacco product taxes by the government.
- Prohibition of the sale of single stick cigarettes.
- Prohibition of maintaining tobacco retail outlets within 100 meters of an educational institution or religious place.
- Making offences under the National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol (NATA) Act into cognizable offences.
- Increasing fines and penalties for offences relating to the NATA Act.
- Discouraging tobacco cultivation and diverting tobacco farmers to other crops.
- Implementing plain packaging.

Sri Lanka has demonstrated strong political commitment to tobacco control over the years. Being the first country in the South-East Asia Region to ratify the WHO FCTC in 2003, several important tobacco control policies were established. In addition, the enactment of the NATA Act in 2006 introduced several significant tobacco control measures including prohibition of tobacco sales to individuals under 21, mandatory health warnings on tobacco packaging, increased taxation on cigarettes, restrictions on mass media advertising and ban on smoking in public places. In line with FCTC Article 11, 80% pictorial health warnings were implemented on cigarette packaging in 2015.

Yet, ensuring effective implementation of established policies also remain a challenge due to continued industry interference. The findings of the TII Index further highlight the urgent need for stronger safeguards, full implementation of Article 5.3, and greater transparency to protect public health policymaking from vested interests.

Protecting future generations from tobacco-related harm demands decisive, transparent action that is firmly protected from tobacco industry interference. Accordingly, ADIC calls upon policymakers and all relevant stakeholders to place public health above commercial interests, to expedite the establishment and effective implementation of critical tobacco control policies without further delay, and to remain vigilant in actively identifying, challenging, and preventing all forms of tobacco industry interference in policy-making processes and public health efforts.