



**ADIC Press Release (13.11.2025)**

**“Potential Tobacco Industry Interference Surfaces in Sri Lanka Under the Disguise of ‘Harm Reduction.’”**

Concerns have been raised regarding potential tobacco industry interference in Sri Lanka following a media briefing held in Colombo by an international organization calling itself “Quit Like Sweden,” on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2025. The group, which introduced itself as a UK-based non-profit platform, initiated what it termed “South Asia’s first Quit Like Sweden Anti-Tobacco Roundtable.”

Although Quit Like Sweden claims to be an independent entity, there are strong indirect links suggesting connections to Philip Morris International (PMI), a leading international tobacco company. According to reporting by the University of Bath’s Tobacco Tactics platform, <https://www.tobaccotactics.org/article/quit-like-sweden/> the organization’s Director, Suely Castro, is employed by Knowledge-Action-Change (KAC), a grantee of the Foundation for a Smoke-Free World (FSFW). The FSFW, renamed Global Action to End Smoking in May 2024, was wholly funded by PMI through a multi-year financial commitment (2018–2023), raising significant concerns about the true independence and objectives of Quit Like Sweden and their initiatives.

The tobacco industry continues to employ diverse and evolving strategies to sustain its market presence and replenish its declining customer base by attracting new users. Through deceptive and unethical marketing approaches, the industry strategically targets vulnerable populations, including youth, children and non-smokers. The emerging nicotine and tobacco products, such as e-cigarettes, nicotine pouches, heated tobacco products (HTPs) and smokeless tobacco products clearly demonstrates how the industry continues to manipulate the public through misleading strategies. These products have not been proven to be effective for cessation at the population level. Instead, alarming evidence on adverse population health effects is mounting, according to the World Health Organization (WHO) (<https://www.who.int/news-room/questions-and-answers/item/tobacco-e-cigarettes>).

The latest WHO report on ‘WHO Position on Tobacco Control and Harm Reduction’ is warning that tobacco and nicotine companies are misappropriating the public health concept of harm reduction while mass marketing harmful products like e-cigarettes and nicotine pouches to the public at large.

Genuine harm reduction programmes see health actors and agencies pursuing health objectives by implementing evidence-based strategies and interventions that are tightly controlled and monitored. ([https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/tobacco-hq/whoposition-nov12.pdf?sfvrsn=dc1f37d3\\_3&download=true](https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/tobacco-hq/whoposition-nov12.pdf?sfvrsn=dc1f37d3_3&download=true)).

Furthermore, The U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has not approved any e-cigarette products to help people quit smoking. The U.S. Preventive Services Task Force concluded there was not enough evidence to know if the benefits of using e-cigarettes to quit smoking out-weigh the harms (<https://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/e-cigarettes/quitting.html>).

Despite the available data based on acceptable evidence, during the session, key speakers from the organization openly advocated for making smoking alternatives more accessible, acceptable and affordable, promoting policies that make these products easier to find, available in varied formats and flavors, and cheaper to purchase.

These narratives mirror the global strategy of the tobacco industry, which seeks to normalize and market emerging nicotine and tobacco products under the misleading banner of “harm reduction,” specifically targeting the youth and children, the future of this world. These products are often branded as “safer alternatives” or “less harmful,” while being packaged in appealing designs and flavors that create a sense of acceptance. Their objective is to target new consumers, as well as individuals attempting to quit or reduce smoking, converting them into consumers of their newest products.

Therefore, these developments underscore the urgent need for robust regulatory measures to counter misleading industry strategies, prevent initiations, and protect public health.

With Sri Lanka’s longstanding commitment to tobacco prevention, the nation’s success in tobacco control has been driven by community empowerment and the implementation of evidence-based policies, and not by the promotion of alternative nicotine and tobacco products falsely presented as harm reduction measures. However, safeguarding this progress requires vigilance and collective action.

The tobacco industry must be held accountable for the immense harm caused by their products and deceptive practices. Tobacco remains the most lethal consumer product ever created, and any intervention involving the industry is never in the interest of people but rather serves to perpetuate disease and death.

Therefore, ADIC urges the National Authority on Tobacco and Alcohol (NATA) and the Ministry of Health to ensure firm and decisive action to safeguard our children, youth, and all citizens from tobacco industry interference, in adherence to Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC.

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