

# PRESS RELEASE



## If Philip Morris Is Serious About A “Smoke-Free World,” It Should Stop Marketing Cigarettes, Fighting Efforts To Reduce Smoking

**Statement of Matthew L. Myers, President, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids**

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WASHINGTON, D.C. – Philip Morris International – the world’s largest non-governmental cigarette manufacturer – has announced that it is establishing a Foundation for a Smoke-Free World, with funding of \$80 million per year over the next 12 years.

Philip Morris has a long history of deceiving the public and doing whatever it takes to sell cigarettes. This is not the first time Philip Morris has announced that it is funding “independent” research, nor is it the first time it has claimed to support “independent” researchers. Each of its past efforts have been nothing more than a smokescreen to divert attention from its marketing practices, the harm its products cause and the strong scientific consensus that already existed – both about the harm of its products and the scientifically proven ways to reduce tobacco use. There is no reason to believe that this announcement is any different.

Today, we know how to reduce tobacco use. The scientific evidence is strong and conclusive. The problem is that companies like Philip Morris continue to oppose the adoption of these policies and programs.

Philip Morris’ claimed commitment to a “smoke-free world” cannot be taken seriously so long as it continues to aggressively market cigarettes and fight proven policies to reduce smoking and save lives around the world. Until Philip Morris ceases these harmful activities, its claims should be seen as yet another public relations stunt aimed at repairing the company’s image and not a serious effort to reduce the death and disease caused by its products. The amount Philip Morris is spending on its new foundation is a drop in the bucket compared to the \$75 billion in revenues and over \$17 billion in profits the company reported in 2016, most of it from selling cigarettes.

If Philip Morris is truly committed to a smoke-free future, it should immediately take two steps: 1) Actively support the policies to reduce cigarette smoking that are endorsed by the public health community and an international public health treaty, the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC); and 2) set an example for the tobacco industry by stopping all marketing of cigarettes.

Philip Morris International’s actions show it remains a major cause of the tobacco epidemic, not a part of the solution:

**There is a global consensus about how to reduce tobacco use. The problem is not a lack of evidence requiring research, it is the fact that Philip Morris and other tobacco companies continue to fight strong policies proven to reduce tobacco use around the world. Philip Morris**

continues to lobby against effective measures called for by the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, such as higher tobacco taxes, graphic health warnings and bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship. An investigative report published by Reuters in July revealed a massive, secret campaign by Philip Morris to undermine the FCTC, depicting “a company that has focused its vast global resources on bringing to heel the world’s tobacco control treaty.” In recent years, Philip Morris has also filed numerous legal challenges to strong tobacco control laws adopted by Australia, Uruguay and other countries. It is the height of hypocrisy for Philip Morris to proclaim publicly that it is helping to solve the tobacco problem while it wages all-out campaigns against efforts to reduce tobacco use and save lives.

**Philip Morris continues to aggressively market cigarettes around the world, often in ways that appeal to kids and much of it targeting low- and middle-income countries that can least afford the burden of tobacco-related death and disease.** In a recent example, Philip Morris launched a global marketing campaign for its best-selling Marlboro cigarettes, called “Be Marlboro,” that uses themes and images that appeal to youth. The campaign, which has been rolled out in over 60 countries, features young people partying, falling in love, playing music and engaging in risky behavior. In many countries, Philip Morris and its subsidiaries have introduced flavored cigarettes that appeal to youth, conducted aggressive marketing near elementary schools, sponsored race cars and concerts, and engaged in other youth-oriented marketing.

**This isn’t the first time Philip Morris has stated a commitment to funding research with the goal of reducing the death and disease caused by cigarettes, but every prior announcement was nothing more than a smokescreen to enable it to continue business as usual.** In 1954, a Philip Morris vice president stated, “[I]f we had any thought or knowledge that in any way we were selling a product harmful to our customers, we would stop business tomorrow.” In 1997, Philip Morris CEO Geoffrey Bible said in a deposition that the company would halt production if presented with evidence that smoking causes lung cancer, stating he would “shut it down instantly.” Yet today, cigarettes make up almost all of Philip Morris International’s business and profits.

Cigarette smoking kills more than 7 million people worldwide each year and is projected to kill 1 billion people this century. To end this terrible epidemic, we need strong action by governments to reduce tobacco use, not empty promises from tobacco companies.

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## Related Resources

- **Public Health Groups and Leaders Worldwide Urge Rejection of Philip Morris' New Foundation**
- **The Facts About Philip Morris International: Company is Cause of the Tobacco Problem, Not the Solution**

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