



15 November 2021

To:

Mr. Frans TIMMERMANS, Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal
Mr. Valdis DOMBROVSKIS, Executive Vice-President for an Economy that works for people, European Commissioner for Trade
Mr. Josep BORELL, Vice-President, High Representative of the EU for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy
Ms. Vera JOUROVA, Vice-President, European Commissioner for Values and Transparency
Ms. Mariya GABRIEL, European Commissioner for Innovation, Research, Culture, Education and Youth
Ms. Kadri SIMSON, European Commissioner for Energy
Mr. Virginijus SINKEVICIUS, European Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries
Mr. Olivier GUERSENT, Director-General, European Commission, DG COMP
Mr. Henrik HOLOLEI, Director-General, European Commission, DG MOVE
Prof. Maria LEPTIN, President of the European Research Council
Mr. Declan COSTELLO, Deputy Director-General, DG ECFIN, European Commission
Mr. Rupert SCHLEGELMILCH, Deputy Director-General, DG TRADE
Ms. Lucilla SIOLI, Director for Digital Industry, European Commission, DG CONNECT
Ms. Elisabetta SIRACUSA, Principal advisor, DG FISMA, European Commission

cc:

Ms. Stella KYRIAKIDES, Commissioner for Health and Food Safety, European Commission
Ms. Sandra GALLINA, Director-General for Health and Food Safety, European Commission
Mr. Pierre DELSAUX, Deputy Director General for Health, DG SANTE, European Commission
Mr. Filip BORKOWSKI, Acting Head of Unit, Cross-border health care and tobacco control, DG SANTE, European Commission

Honourable Commission Vice-Presidents, Commissioners, Directors-General, European Commission officials,

Re: Civil society concerns about tobacco industry sponsorship of the [European Business Summit 2021 “Building a more sustainable, digital and resilient Union”](#), November 17th and 18th

On behalf of a group of international public health organisations, **we are writing to express our concern about your reported involvement in the event [European Business Summit 2021 edition titled “Building a more sustainable, digital and resilient Union”](#)** and to respectfully ask you to withdraw your participation from it. The event is organised in partnership with Japan Tobacco International (JTI), and features a speaker in a session called **“[The corporate responsibility to foster trust in the public debate](#)”**. JTI is the one of the world’s largest tobacco companies and smoking is the single most preventable cause of ill-health and death.

Your participation, representing the European Commission, in this event, where JTI is a partner and a speaker, goes against the obligations and principles enshrined in the WHO [Framework Convention](#)

[on Tobacco Control \(WHO FCTC\)](#), a global treaty whose 182 Parties include the EU and all its Member States.

We are concerned that your presence will undoubtedly be used to create an appearance of respectability for a company – and indeed an industry – with an abysmal track record. Tobacco is unlike any other product. It threatens economies, health systems, societies and environment around the world. Article 5.3 of the FCTC, based on the principle that the interests of the tobacco industry are incompatible with the public interest, requires Parties to the treaty to protect their policies from the “commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry”. **The [Guidelines elaborating on Article 5.3](#) recommend that governments and public officials reject tobacco industry partnerships.** These provisions stemmed from [overwhelming evidence](#) of **tobacco industry misconduct** and recognition that it remains the [greatest obstacle](#) to the global goal of advancing tobacco control policies and preventing tobacco use.

As per the [website description](#), the purpose of the event is to offer its partners the opportunity to influence the EU decision-making process by bringing their expertise, priorities and expectations to the attention of a diverse and influential audience including EU representatives. EBS also offers more private networking opportunities such as lunches and dinners with business leaders and private sessions and meetings with key decision-makers to allow the partners to reach their goals. In addition, according to the [event's own brochure](#), the hybrid event combines a wide online outreach with over 6,000 viewers and the physical participation of key institutional and business actors at Egmont Palace. The event will be moderated by international media outlets such as FT, The Wall Street Journal, Bloomberg.

We strongly believe it is not your intention to contribute to legitimising a company or an industry against legal obligations, international practice and practical guidance to public officials. We also welcome and support the **European Commission's commitment to the [European Beating Cancer Plan](#)**, which foresees achieving a tobacco-free Europe through, inter alia, restricting the tobacco industry's ability to promote its products or position itself as a responsible corporate citizen while its products continue to kill millions of people in Europe and across the world.

This is why we write to respectfully request your support by withdrawing your participation in this event and not contributing to the appearance of respectability for a disreputable industry. In turn, we pledge to stay vigilant in the defence of international law concerning tobacco industry interference and we will continue to warn all relevant parties around the world of the dangerous implications of engagement with the tobacco industry.

We remain confident that neither you nor your esteemed colleagues in the European Commission, will be misled by the toxic influence of the tobacco industry, no matter how they may attempt to ingratiate themselves in global and European agendas. **We would be delighted if we were able to thank you publicly for taking the bold step of rejecting tobacco industry sponsorship and interference.** We would also be delighted and honoured if you were to agree to meet with a small group of our organisations and discuss our concerns.

Sincerely,

Anca Toma, Director, Smoke Free Partnership

Olivier Hoedeman, Coordinator, Corporate Europe Observatory

Wendy Yared, Director, Association of European Cancer Leagues

Cornel Radu-Loghin, Secretary general, European Network for Smoking and Tobacco Prevention

Milka Sokolović, Director General, European Public Health Alliance

Paul de Clerck, Programme Coordinator, Friends of the Earth