



Department  
of Health



Foreign &  
Commonwealth  
Office

**United Kingdom's revised guidelines for overseas posts  
on support to the tobacco industry**

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## United Kingdom's revised guidelines for overseas posts on support to the tobacco industry

1. The Department of Health (DH) have decided to be more prescriptive in relation to the provision of support to the tobacco industry, to ensure any such support is consistent with the provisions of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The Government takes very seriously its obligations as a Party to the (FCTC). This includes the treaty commitment at Article 5.3 to protect public health policies with respect to tobacco control from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry.
2. Existing guidance on the support available to UK companies overseas involved in the production of Tobacco products was circulated to FCO posts in 1999 (Diptels No. 584, 585 and 586). A further update was provided in 2005, (Diptel No.129) following the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) coming into force. The updated guidelines below have been prepared jointly by the DH, UKTI and FCO.
3. For the purposes of the guidelines, taking into account Article 1 of the FCTC, the WHO provides the following definition: *"Tobacco industry" means tobacco manufacturers, wholesale distributors, and importers of tobacco products. In addition, the term "tobacco industry" includes tobacco growers, associations or other entities representing any of the above, as well as industry lobbyists.*

### Guidelines:

4. In line with our treaty obligations, Posts should encourage and support the fullest implementation of the provisions of the FCTC, including the implementation of comprehensive, evidence-based tobacco control strategies. Posts should offer access to expertise on public health, tobacco control and tackling the supply of illicit tobacco that exists within HMG.
5. Posts should limit interactions with the tobacco industry, including any person or organisation that is likely to be working to further the interests of the tobacco industry. In the event that interactions with the tobacco industry are necessary, these should be conducted with maximum transparency to demonstrate our compliance with the FCTC.
6. Posts must **not**:
  - Be involved in activities with the specific purpose of promoting the sale of tobacco or tobacco related products (including promotional goods);
  - Encourage investment in the tobacco industry, or provide any assistance in helping tobacco companies influence non-discriminatory local business policies to their advantage (e.g.: taxation, plain/standardised packaging, etc);
  - Accept any direct or indirect funding from the tobacco industry;
  - Accept advertisements for UK or local tobacco products in publications issued by Post, or sponsorship from tobacco companies for any activities, including Chevening Scholarships. Any government brand (including the FCO's) must not be used together with the branding of a tobacco company or any tobacco product;
  - Attend or otherwise support receptions or high profile events, especially those where a tobacco company is the sole or main sponsor and/or which are overtly to promote tobacco products or the tobacco industry (such as the official opening of a UK tobacco factory overseas);

- Offer any endorsement of, or recommendations for, any tobacco company and should be careful to avoid creating the impression that any such endorsement exists;
  - Endorse projects which are funded directly or indirectly by the tobacco industry and should avoid agreeing to any sponsorship of the activities or work of the tobacco industry;
  - Endorse, support, form partnerships with, or participate in activities of the tobacco industry that could be described as “socially responsible”, that relate, for example, to public education or that are aimed at improving public health;
  - Lobby against any local Administration’s policies that are aimed at improving public health; or
  - Engage with foreign governments on behalf of the tobacco industry, except in cases where local policies could be considered protectionist or discriminatory.
7. Given the general, non-discriminatory basis of UK government support for UK business posts can, if approached, provide limited support (whilst avoiding providing the impression that they are promoting tobacco use) by:
- Offering to provide the basic trade, investment and political information that is available to other British businesses;
  - Offering assistance to UK tobacco companies in resolving business problems e.g. customs or port clearance, smuggling, trademark violations etc, that are potentially discriminatory against British businesses; or
  - Providing information to assist tobacco companies to comply with foreign government laws or regulations.
8. The DH has policy responsibility for tobacco control and for the implementation of the FCTC. Posts should avoid engaging with the tobacco industry or their representatives on matters of policy. Tobacco companies should be invited to provide their views on policy-related matters directly to the DH Tobacco Programme in London. Where policy is discussed, posts should consider providing an overview to the DH Tobacco Programme for information.
9. Posts should also endeavour to verify whether an organisation, body, group or institution that makes any approach regarding tobacco control has any affiliation to or link with the tobacco industry. Posts may wish to make any disclosed links transparent.
10. Posts should bear in mind that public health oriented civil society groups around the world are well organised and connected and may seek to highlight any activity that appears to conflict with the FCTC or these guidelines. The FCTC states that the “participation of civil society is essential in achieving the objective of the Convention and its protocols”.