PRESS RELEASE

Tobacco Control in Africa: CISLAC condemns unjust threats by BAT, others

The Civil Society Legislative Advocacy Centre (CISLAC) condemns in totality, the open display of rascality arising from the recent threats by British American Tobacco (BAT) and other multinational tobacco firms on some African nations with wild demand that they repeal or dilute existing protections against the rising dreaded health and socio-economic impacts of tobacco use on the continent.

We are not unaware of some dangerous and terrible efforts by the group to frustrate successes against tobacco use across Uganda, Namibia, Togo, Gabon, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya and Burkina Faso, not minding the fact that tobacco use constitutes the second major cause of mortality in the world leading to untimely deaths of millions of people worldwide with about 6 million deaths annually out of which 600,000 are non-smokers coupled with potentially eight million estimated deaths by year 2030, most especially from the developing countries.

We are also aware of evil propensity of their emptied legal intimidations and threats, but such must not constitute a formidable obstacle to backpedal the current gains recorded against the dreaded effects of tobacco use in Africa, as the on-going drives for the passage or implementation of Comprehensive Tobacco Control Bill or Act respectively are in consonant with World Health Organisation (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), an evidence-based treaty that reaffirms the right of all people to the highest standard of health.

While employment creation constitutes an economic threat by the firms against African governments, most of African countries are doing poorly in terms of employment creation with recent report by International Labour Organisation (ILO) confirming the rising unemployment as well as poverty rate among working youth in Africa.

We urge African governments to desist from succumbing to the emptied legal and economic threats by the group and uphold passage and implementation of regulations in accordance to the pro-poor provisions of the WHO FCTC, giving serious concern to the increasingly socio-economic burden of tobacco use on families, the poor, and health systems.

We also call on the governments to adopt and invest in healthy means of livelihood for the citizens to effectively engage to avert economic threats by tobacco industries.

We demand intensified and continuous awareness among policy sponsors and policy champions of tobacco control on the continent including inter-ministerial committee; and sustained advocacy by the Tobacco Control Coalitions in Africa to fast-track the passage/implementation of comprehensive Tobacco Control Bill/Act o in accordance with Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC).
We further call urge concerted efforts by well-meaning citizens to canvass against acceptance of dreadful donations and enticements by their governments from tobacco industries.

Signed:

(Auwal Ibrahim Musa (Rafsanjani))
Executive Director, CISLAC