

November 2025

Youth Open Letter to Governments at the Eleventh Session of the Conference of the Parties to the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

We are the generation that will live longest with the consequences of your decisions on tobacco control. With youth vaping rates surging globally and the tobacco industry targeting a new generation through novel products, we are watching our peers become addicted in real time while inheriting decades of environmental and health costs. We refuse to inherit a system built on addiction, pollution, and profit.

The tobacco industry has spent decades manipulating governments, misleading the public, and poisoning our environment, while making us pay for the damage.

At the Eleventh Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP11) to the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), you have the power to change this.

Our Demands

1. Make the Industry Pay Through Administrative Liability (Article 19, WHO FCTC)

Stop making taxpayers cover the cost of tobacco's damage. Leverage administrative liability mechanisms—taxes, cost-recovery levies, fines, and license suspensions—to shift financial burden back to the industry that profits from addiction and disease. International cooperation and coordinated legal strategies are essential to make this work.

2. Stop Tobacco Industry Environmental Greenwashing (Articles 18 & 5.3, WHO FCTC)

Exclude the tobacco industry from all environmental activities and policymaking. Classify tobacco waste as hazardous. Industry-led schemes like Extended Producer Responsibility and Environmental, Social, and Governance narratives are greenwashing that gives tobacco companies access to policy processes they should never have.

3. Strengthen Tobacco Product Regulation (Articles 9 & 10, WHO FCTC)

Ban novel recreational addictive products, which are aggressively marketed to youth and cannot be considered harm-reduction strategies or public health interventions. Where bans cannot yet be adopted, Parties should adopt strict regulatory measures, including a comprehensive flavors ban, controls on disposable vapes and nicotine pouches, and full prohibitions on advertising, promotion, and sponsorship. Include studies on the elimination of toxic cigarette filters as hazardous waste (a gap not yet addressed under Articles 9 and 10) and ensure that all regulatory processes are protected from tobacco and related interests in accordance with Article 5.3.

4. Ensure Harm Reduction Is Human-Rights-Based (Articles 5.2(b) & 5.3, WHO FCTC)

Harm reduction efforts must be grounded in human rights and public health, not industry profit. Parties must not justify the expansion of the tobacco industry or give it legitimacy. Keep tobacco control policy independent from industry influence and industry-funded research. Those who have banned the products should be supported, and information exchange should be encouraged.

5. Support Forward-Looking Measures That Target the Industry (Articles 2.1 & 5.3, WHO FCTC)

The WHO FCTC sets minimum standards, but stronger measures are needed. Support forward-looking measures that target the tobacco industry itself, not just its products, including polluter-pays taxes, carving tobacco out of trade protections like investor-state dispute settlement, and liability mechanisms. Back these with international cooperation so no country faces industry retaliation alone.

COP11 Must Deliver Decisions that

- Ensure access to justice through administrative liability mechanisms and promote international cooperation on cost-recovery, environmental taxes, and sanctions.
- Help Parties classify tobacco waste as hazardous and prohibit the tobacco industry's greenwashing activities and participation in environmental policymaking, which violates Article 5.3.
- Strengthen Articles 9 and 10 implementation by banning novel recreational addictive products (including flavored and disposable vapes and nicotine pouches); where bans cannot yet be adopted, mandate strict regulatory measures, including a flavors ban; support work on the elimination of toxic cigarette filters as hazardous waste; and ensure all regulatory processes are protected from tobacco and related interests in accordance with Article 5.3.
- Affirm that harm reduction must be human-rights-based and cannot treat tobacco industry products as public health interventions; and facilitate support and information exchange among Parties that have banned such products from the tobacco industry.
- Promote forward-looking measures targeting the tobacco industry, including trade carve-outs, liability frameworks, and coordinated legal strategies.

The COP must place the global youth at the center of its decision-making. COPI I is your opportunity to ensure meaningful youth engagement in the processes of developing and implementing these measures. The choices you make today will define the future we inherit.

We, the youth, are united in raising our voices and holding you accountable for protecting us against an industry that profits from our harm.

We demand better. We deserve better.

Signees of the Open Letter:

