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Free Trade and Investment Agreements Threaten Public Health

Vienna, Austria—December 5, 2016—The main objective of any global trade agreement is to encourage the free movement of goods and service between countries by removal of any forms of tariff and non-tariff barriers. However, when this principle is applied to tobacco products, public health may suffer in the countries governed by these very agreements, according to a presentation by Dr. Zariah Zain of Lincoln University College Malaysia in Malaysia at the **IASLC 17th World Conference on Lung Cancer** in Vienna, Austria.

“Tobacco is not like any legal commodity, it is highly addictive, cause deaths, serious debilitating morbidity, about 30% of all cancer incidence. An industry such as the tobacco industry should not be given any privileges and allowed to benefit from trade agreement to gain hefty profits at the expense of public health,” Dr. Zain said.

The control of tobacco is one of the most cost effective public health strategy and it is the only legal consumer product that has an international law to curb its supply and demands via the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). However, Zain pointed out that there are clauses in many free trade agreements that can override the WHO Framework.

As an example, Dr. Zain cited nine specific clauses in the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPPA), which was negotiated by 12 countries of the Pacific Rim including Malaysia. She cited Chapter 2 of the TPPA the requires tobacco be treated like any other product in terms of tariff reduction.

“For the most part, this means that tobacco tariffs are reduced to zero. Unless there is significant compensating increase in domestic excise taxes, reduced tariffs will benefit the industry with huge profits,” she said.

Although the TPPA text does provide exemption from the Investor-State Dispute Settlement (ISDS), this is well short of the full exemption for tobacco from the entire agreement proposed by Malaysia.

“There are various chapters within the TPPA that provide huge opportunities for the tobacco industry to undermine government efforts to implement effective tobacco control measures,” she said.



About the WCLC:

The WCLC is the world's largest meeting dedicated to lung cancer and other thoracic malignancies, attracting more than 6,000 researchers, physicians, and specialists from more than 100 countries. The goal is to increase awareness, collaboration, and understanding of lung cancer, and to help participants implement the latest developments across the globe. Organized under the theme of "Together Against Lung Cancer," the conference will cover a wide range of disciplines and unveil several research studies and clinical trial results. For more information, visit <http://wclc2016.iaslc.org/>.

About the IASLC:

The International Association for the Study of Lung Cancer (IASLC) is the only global organization dedicated to the study of lung cancer. Founded in 1974, the association's membership includes more than 5,000 lung cancer specialists in over 100 countries. Visit www.iaslc.org for more information.

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