

Protect Young People, Make the Tobacco Industry Pay

International Youth Day 2026 open letter to governments

7 August 2026

To: Heads of State and Government

Dear leaders and decision-makers,

On International Youth Day, we, participants of the [Global Youth Voices](#), a movement of youth organizations and coalitions spanning more than 135 countries, write with an important message that affects our generation. We are being aggressively targeted by the tobacco industry that continually [reinvents](#) how addiction is designed, promoted, and normalized. We are also the generation that will live longest with the health, environmental, economic, and human rights consequences of the decisions you make now.

The tobacco and nicotine industry's [tactics](#) evolve faster than policies that control them. Flavors, sleek devices, influencer content, sports and entertainment sponsorships, digital promotion, and carefully branded “sustainability” initiatives all serve the same business objective: recruit and addict new consumers.

This year brings a clear test of public leadership. A global scientific assessment of nicotine has been [triggered](#) at the World Health Organization (WHO), while governments begin carrying out recent WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) decisions on liability, environmental harm and forward-looking tobacco control. These processes have different mandates, but they face the same question: *will public institutions protect young people faster than the industry can adapt?*

The industry is recruiting its next generation of customers. Governments must protect the current generation and ensure the future generation is free from addiction. We therefore call on every institution, within its mandate, to act on four priorities:

- **Stop the pipeline to addiction.** Ban [novel](#) recreational addictive tobacco and nicotine products. Where [bans](#) have not yet been adopted, apply and enforce the strongest possible restrictions, including bans on flavors, youth-oriented design, access and all advertising, promotion and sponsorship across digital media, influencers, sports, entertainment and emerging technology environments.
- **Make the industry pay.** Put [liability](#) and the polluter-pays principle into practice through levies, fees, penalties, compensation and remediation for health, environmental and economic harms. Do not reward the industry with influence or legitimacy through corporate social responsibility, recycling or [extended producer responsibility](#) schemes.

- **Protect policy from tobacco industry interference.** [Apply](#) WHO FCTC Article 5.3, disclose and limit interactions to strictly necessary, manage conflicts of interest and reject industry funding. Establish formal, adequately supported ways for independent young people to shape, monitor and evaluate the policies that determine our future.
- **Keep nicotine science independent.** Ensure the WHO review is rigorous, transparent and free from tobacco and nicotine industry influence, including influence exercised through industry-funded researches/researchers, front groups or other proxies. It must fully [examine](#) dependence, youth impacts, product design and population-level consequences.

By the end of 2026, we ask governments and international institutions to publish the concrete steps they will take on these priorities and explain how independent youth voices will help shape and monitor them. We will measure commitment by outcomes, not invitations, slogans or voluntary promises.

The choice is yours: continue allowing young people to pay with their health and their future or make the tobacco industry pay for the harm it causes.

Signed by spokespersons of the Global Youth Voices:

1. **Lisa Lu**, International Youth Tobacco Control
2. **Sama Ghazlan**, International Pharmaceutical Students' Federation
3. **Karina Mocanu**, European Network for Smoking and Tobacco Prevention Next
4. **Sarah Rauzana**, ASEAN Youth Organization
5. **Juan Palacio**, Alianza Juvenil por el Bienestar y Desarrollo
6. **Ana Paula Ramis Aguilar**, Red Internacional de Promotores ODS
7. **Mehrbano Hosseinirad**, Iranian Medical Students Association
8. **David Delos Santos**, Healthy Philippines Alliance Youth Network
9. **Lesego Mateme**, South African Tobacco-Free Youth Forum
10. **Yvette Mbewe**, Tobacco Free Association of Zambia Youth Advocates
11. **Gene Gesite Jr.**, Global Youth Voices

Cc:

António Guterres, Secretary-General, United Nations;

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organization;

Andrew Black, Acting Head, WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Secretariat;

Amb. Andranik Hovhannisyan, Chair, United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs;

Inger Andersen, Executive Director, United Nations Environment Programme;

Catherine Russell, Executive Director, United Nations Children's Fund



Alianza Juvenil
Bienestar & Desarrollo



next ENSP
Fighting Tobacco Use in Europe



ASEAN YOUTH ORGANIZATION



Youth Health Organization INTERNATIONAL

LENTERA



ANAK foundation



国際連合経済社会理事会特殊諮問資格非政府組織 (国連 NGO)
国際学生会議所
UNIVERSITY STUDENT CHAMBER INTERNATIONAL



STOWELINK INC.
TRANSFORMING AND EMPOWERING LIVES



SOUTH AFRICAN TOBACCO-FREE YOUTH FORUM
A smoke free generation in our lifetime



Rotaract Club La Paz Sur



Healthy Philippines Alliance Youth Network



Global Youth Biodiversity Network



Interact Club La Paz Sur



GYM 2021



Red Internacional Promotores ODS Panamá



Carta de la Tierra



Juventud Unida en Acción



'Pratyasha' Anti-Drug'S Club
প্রত্যাশা মাদক বিরোধী সংগঠন





About the Global Youth Voices

This letter was coordinated by the Global Youth Voices (GYV). GYV is a movement that represents over 70 youth organizations and coalitions covering 135 countries across the globe that seeks to make the tobacco industry pay for the harms caused to the planet and its people, not only for those in this generation, but also future generations. In May 2024, GYV adopted the [GYV Declaration](#), which sets out its common demands on tobacco industry interference, addictive products, environmental harm and accountability. Youth concerns were later brought into global media through The New York Times [feature](#), Uncovering the Truths Behind the Tobacco Industry's Deception. GYV messages have also been amplified by the [World Health Organization](#) and the WHO FCTC [Secretariat](#), including at COP10, where GYV became the first youth movement to [address](#) the Conference of the Parties GYV is convened by the Global Center for Good Governance in Tobacco Control.

Participating Youth Organizations of the Global Youth Voices Movement:

1. #MentalHealthPH, Philippines
2. 3600 Infinitum MTB, Bolivia
3. A Non Smoking Generation, Sweden
4. Ahli Parlimen Belia Malaysia, Malaysia
5. Alianza Juvenil Antitabaco, Ecuador
6. Alianza Juvenil por el Bienestar y Desarrollo, Latin America,
7. ASEAN Youth Organization (AYO), Southeast Asia
8. Asian Medical Students' Association (AMSA) Philippines
9. Asian Medical Students' Association Hong Kong (AMSAHK)
10. Asociación de Estudiantes Escuela de Medicina Universidad de Costa Rica, Costa Rica
11. Bangladesh Medical Students' Society (BMSS)
12. BEEs' Club, Thailand
13. Champions for Humanity and National Governance Empowerment, Kenya
14. Child Rights Network, Philippines
15. Den of Hope, Kenya
16. Ecopeace Teen Café
17. Education Against Tobacco Brazil
18. European Network for Smoking and Tobacco Prevention Youth Group (ENSPNext)
19. Federation of Junior Chapters of the Philippine Pharmacists' Association
20. FOS Open Scouting, Belgium
21. Global Youth Biodiversity Network Venezuela
22. Global Youth for Tobacco Control (Y4TC)
23. Global Youth Meet on Health 2021 (GYM)
24. Green for Sudan
25. Green Speaking

26. Healthy Philippines Alliance Youth Network
27. IGUAL, Bolivia
28. Indonesian Youth Council for Tactical Changes (IYCTC)
29. Interact Club La Paz Sur, Bolivia
30. International African Youth, Mental Health and Environmental Initiatives, Kenya
31. International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA)
32. International Helping for the Young, Chad
33. International Pharmaceutical Students Federation (IPSF)
34. International Youth Tobacco Control
35. Iranian Medical Students' Association (IMSA-Iran)
36. Jaishi Youth Initiative from Ghana
37. Joven Líder Carta de la Tierra, Costa Rica
38. Jóvenes Indígenas y Afrobolivianos de Santa Cruz de la Sierra, JIASC, Bolivia
39. Juventud Unida en Acción, Venezuela
40. M.L Jallow Ecovillage Project The Gambia
41. Marurui Youth Power for a Better Tomorrow, Kenya
42. Movimiento Juventud Saludable, Costa Rica
43. Myanmar Youth Foundation for SDGs
44. New Gen Communicator, Thailand
45. No-More-Tobacco-21st-Century, India
46. Philippine Smoke-Free Movement Youth
47. Pratyasha Anti-drug's Club, Bangladesh
48. Red Internacional Promotores de ODS (Panamá)
49. Red Internacional Promotores de ODS (RIPO)
50. Red Mundial de Jóvenes Políticos La Paz, Bolivia
51. Refleacciona con Responsabilidad A.C., Mexico
52. Rotaract Club La Paz Sur, Bolivia
53. Royal Health Awareness Society, Jordan
54. San Beda Economics Society, Philippines
55. Sauti ya Mtoto Foundation (Voice of Child Foundation), Tanzania
56. Sociedad Científica de Estudiantes de Medicina de la Universidad Privada Franz Tamayo, Bolivia
57. South African Tobacco Free Youth Forum
58. SPARC, Pakistan
59. Stowelink Foundation, Kenya
60. The Good Society IIUM, Malaysia
61. Tobacco Free Association of Zambia (TOFAZA) Youth Advocates
62. Uasin Gishu County Peace Club of Kenya
63. UNISC International, Japan
64. Vietnam Youth Union (HCYU)
65. Y-ACT (Youth in Action), Africa
66. Yayasan Lentera Anak Indonesia
67. Youth Leaders and Ambassadors' Network Chad
68. Youth Action Network (YAN), Sri Lanka
69. Youth Advocacy Against Alcohol and Drug (YAADA), Zambia
70. Youth against Alcoholism and Drug Dependency (YADD), Zimbabwe
71. Youth Against Vape, Philippines
72. Youth Council in Action for Nation (YOUTH CAN), Nepal
73. Youth for Mental Health Coalition, Philippines
74. Youth Health Organization (YHO), Europe
75. Youth Help Sierra Leone