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If Philip Morris Is Serious About a “Smoke-Free Future,” It Should Stop Marketing Cigarettes, Fighting Efforts to Reduce Smoking

Statement of Matthew L. Myers, President, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and Robin Koval, CEO & President, Truth Initiative

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Philip Morris International – the world’s largest non-governmental cigarette manufacturer – this week launched a new website that claims the company is committed to a “smoke-free future.” As long as Philip Morris continues to do everything it can to fight proven policies and programs that reduce smoking and continues to aggressively market cigarettes around the world, often in ways that appeal to children, their claims do not deserve to be taken seriously.

If Philip Morris is truly committed to a smoke-free future, it should immediately take two steps: 1) Actively support the policies to reduce cigarette smoking that are endorsed by the public health community and an international public health treaty, the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control; and 2) set an example for the tobacco industry by stopping all marketing of cigarettes. Until Philip Morris takes these steps, its purported commitment to a smoke-free future should be seen as yet another public relations stunt aimed at repairing the company’s image and not a serious effort to reduce the death and disease caused by its products.

Here is why Philip Morris International’s claims are inconsistent with its current behavior:

Philip Morris is still fighting strong policies proven to reduce tobacco use around the world. The company continues to lobby against effective measures such as higher tobacco taxes, graphic health warnings and bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship. In recent years, it has filed numerous legal challenges to strong tobacco control laws adopted by Australia, Uruguay and other countries. If it is serious about creating a smoke-free future, Philip Morris must stop opposing these measures and instead actively and publicly support them.

Philip Morris continues to aggressively market cigarettes around the world, often in ways that appeal to kids and much of its targeting low- and middle-income countries that can least afford the burden of tobacco-related death and disease. In a recent example, Philip Morris launched a [global marketing campaign for its best-selling Marlboro cigarettes](#), called “Be Marlboro,” that uses themes and images that appeal to youth. The campaign, which has been rolled out in over 60 countries, features young people partying, falling in love, playing music and engaging in risky behavior. In many countries, Philip Morris and its subsidiaries have introduced flavored cigarettes that appeal to youth, conducted aggressive marketing near elementary schools, sponsored race cars and concerts, and engaged in other youth-oriented marketing.

This isn't the first time Philip Morris has stated a commitment to ending cigarette sales, but every prior announcement was nothing more than a smokescreen to enable it to continue business as usual. In 1954, a Philip Morris vice president stated, “[I]f we had any thought or knowledge that in any way we were selling a product harmful to our customers, we would stop business tomorrow.” In 1997, Philip Morris CEO Geoffrey Bible said in a deposition that the company would halt production if presented with evidence that smoking causes lung cancer, stating he would “shut it down instantly.” Yet today, cigarettes make up almost all of Philip Morris International’s business and profits.

All the while, cigarette smoking kills six million people worldwide each year and is projected to kill one billion people this century. To end this terrible epidemic, we need strong action by governments to reduce tobacco use, not empty promises from tobacco companies. If Philip Morris International is seriously committed to a world free of traditional cigarettes, it will join with public health leaders across the globe in supporting the strongest possible policies and programs to make this happen.