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Contact:

Gigi Kellett, Corporate Accountability International, +1 617-695-2525
Christina Rossi, Corporate Accountability International, +1 617-695-2525
Neil Collishaw, Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada, +1 613 233-4878
Tony Clarke, Polaris Institute, +1 613-237-1717

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**Gates Foundation Pulls Funding From Canadian Development
Organization Due to Ties with Big Tobacco**
African NGOs withdraw support from joint strategy meeting

Statement of Gigi Kellett, Corporate Accountability International
Director, Campaign Challenging Big Tobacco

The current board membership of a Canadian governmental development organization, the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), represents a fundamental and irreconcilable conflict of interest between the tobacco industry's interests and public health policy – and is drawing international scrutiny and compromising international law.

The decision by the Canadian government to appoint a board member of Imperial Tobacco Canada to Chair of the IDRC has tarnished its reputation and has already had a negative impact on IDRC's work. On Friday, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation announced that it is cancelling a \$5.2 million grant to the IDRC that would have supported tobacco control activities in Africa. In a statement, the Gates Foundation expressed its disappointment and said that "this conflict is unacceptable as we work to support meaningful tobacco control programs in Africa. Therefore, we are terminating our tobacco control grant to IDRC, effective immediately." The Foundation expressed its intention to remain committed to tobacco control work in Africa.

This announcement follows just two days after the African Tobacco Control Alliance (ATCA), a network of more than 40 member organizations in 26 African countries, withdrew its support from an April tobacco control strategy meeting with IDRC. Despite ATCA's request, IDRC refused to postpone the meeting until the conflict was resolved. Citing the global tobacco treaty, formally known as the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) and ATCA's constitutional obligations to have no linkages whatsoever with the tobacco industry, the organization also encouraged its membership and other NGOs, researchers and public health officials not to attend the meeting.

We commend both the Gates Foundation and the members of ATCA for their conviction and actions to protect public health policies from tobacco industry interference.

IDRC's mission is to help build healthier, more equitable, and prosperous societies in lower and middle income countries. The IDRC has supported tobacco control initiatives in many countries directly as well as through its Research for International Tobacco Control (RITC) program.

Today, tobacco kills 5.4 million people around the world each year. If current trends continue, tobacco will claim more than eight million lives per year by 2030, with 80 percent of those deaths in developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. Tobacco remains the largest preventable epidemic of our time.

The world community has unified around the FCTC, the world's first public health and corporate accountability treaty. The tobacco industry remains the single greatest threat to the treaty's implementation; and eliminating conflicts of interest is central to the treaty's global effectiveness, ultimately helping to save millions of lives.

We find it untenable that Ms. Barbara McDougall, a former director of Imperial Tobacco Canada (a subsidiary of British American Tobacco and one of the world's largest tobacco transnational corporations), serves as the board chair of the IDRC. The cross appointment continued for more than a year after Parties to the FCTC, including Canada, unanimously agreed to guidelines that state that no tobacco industry official should be appointed to government agencies active in health issues.

Ms. McDougall's presence on the IDRC Board of Directors violates the organization's commitment to accountable governance. We note also that IDRC itself states, "[t]he Board has a stringent conflict of interest policy to maintain the highest standard of integrity for its members and the Centre as a whole." Ms. McDougall's longstanding ties to the tobacco industry and her tenure on the board are a failure by Canadian authorities to follow its obligations to international law.

The Article 5.3 guidelines recognize "*[t]here is a fundamental and irreconcilable conflict between the tobacco industry's interests and public health policy interests.*" The guidelines also clearly state that "*Parties should not allow any person employed by the tobacco industry or any entity working to further its interests to be a member of any government body, committee or advisory group that sets or implements tobacco control or public health policy.*"

We urge the Canadian government to immediately remedy this situation and provide the international community with an assurance that no similar conflict of interest will occur in the future. Canada must fully implement the FCTC's Article 5.3 and its related guidelines.

We call on Canada to remain a responsible supporter of tobacco control at home as well as in regions around the world. Appropriate Canadian authorities should launch an internal investigation to determine whether and how deeply the tobacco industry has made its way into public health arenas. The Canadian government must now develop a comprehensive plan to fully apply Article 5.3 and the Article 5.3 guidelines to help ensure the effective implementation of the global tobacco treaty.

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Corporate Accountability International, formerly Infact, is a membership organization that protects people by waging and winning campaigns challenging irresponsible and dangerous corporate actions around the world. For 30 years, we've forced corporations—like Nestlé, General Electric and Philip Morris/Altria—to stop abusive actions. Corporate Accountability is an NGO in Official Relations with the World Health Organization (WHO), is an accredited observer to the FCTC Conference of the Parties and has Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (UN ECOSOC).

The Network for Accountability of Tobacco Transnationals (NATT) is comprised of more than 100 organizations in 50 countries, including consumer, environmental, fair trade, human rights, faith-

based, and corporate accountability organizations. NATT works to ensure a strong, unified voice for the implementation of the global tobacco treaty and contributes to the establishment of broad global standards that hold corporations accountable for policies, practices, and products that endanger human health and the environment.

Members of the Network for Accountability of Tobacco Transnationals and the following organizations wished to be listed as endorsing this statement:

Alliance Nationale des Consommateurs et de l'Environnement (ANCE), Togo
Corporate Accountability International, Colombia
Consumer Information Network, Kenya
Environmental Rights Action, Nigeria
Indian Society Against Smoking, Asha Parivar, India
Lutte Contre le Tabagisme en Afrique (LUCTAF), Democratic Republic of Congo
National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM), India
National Council Against Smoking, South Africa
Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada, Canada
Polaris Institute, Canada
Swarna Hansa Foundation, Sri Lanka
Vision for Alternative Development (VALD), Ghana
Zambia Consumer Rights Association, Zambia