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## Press Release

### **Tobacco industry keeps politicians happy Forum Rauchfrei will remind guests at the tobacco industry celebration of the many tobacco-related deaths**

The Association of the Cigarette Industry (VdC) is inviting representatives from politics and business to its Spring Celebration on Tuesday, 28 March at 6 p.m. in the TIPI tent near the Chancellery. There will be a feast for the taste-buds with delicate titbits and champagne, and artists will provide entertainment. And in passing there will be talk about tobacco. At the end of the evening the guests can fill their pockets with complimentary cigarettes, just as they do every year. In previous years numerous politicians attended, such as the federal government officer responsible for drug control with her tobacco consultant, the secretary-general of the Christian Democratic Union party (CDU) and members of the Bundestag.

These "Light Evenings," as the hosting Association of the Cigarette Industry calls them, provide a vivid visual lesson as to how the tobacco lobby operates in Germany. The influence exerted by the tobacco industry is extensive. Last year Philip Morris invited representatives of important segments of society to a "Parliamentary Evening," and British American Tobacco did the same for a "Dialogue Event" at the Hamburg Land Office. On 14 February of this year the VdC called a "Blue Hour" meeting for journalists, and on 8 March with Bishop Huber representing the Protestant Church in Germany (EKD) and Karl Jüsten from the Catholic Church, the "Spree Discussions" were held on the subject of "freedoms." Lastly, there were also dialogue sessions, most recently on 6 March 2006, held by the Tobacco Retailers Association (MUT) with Peter Bleser, Chair of the Task Force on Consumer Protection, Food and Agriculture of the CDU/CSU faction in the Bundestag. All events are intended only for invited guests. Therefore, any uninvited critical journalists are turned away.

Forum Rauchfrei will be reminding passers-by in front of the TIPI tent of the many dead from tobacco. Johannes Spatz, spokesperson for Forum Rauchfrei, is calling for a boycott of this tobacco industry event. The tobacco industry wishes to corrupt the political system with such events. With today's event also, the tobacco industry wants to pull the political decision makers onto their side. Until now they have been very successful, using party contributions, bribing of scientists, awarding of honorary patronages to government ministers, sponsoring of social and cultural projects, social events and celebrations. In this way they have created a political climate in Germany which is favourable to their interests and which is unique in Europe. There is no other country in Europe which permits so much freedom for a product which, when used as directed, leads to death.