



Tommaso Di Giovanni

VICE PRESIDENT COMMUNICATIONS
& ENGAGEMENT

Tommaso Di Giovanni is Vice President Communications & Engagement at Philip Morris International (PMI). In his current role he is responsible for leading and supporting affiliates around the world in their efforts to share PMI's vision for a smoke-free future with the media and other stakeholders.

Since he joined PMI in 2001, Tommaso has worked in various capacities within the organization with a focus on business development, regulatory affairs, and communications in France, Switzerland, Latin America (based in NYC), Brazil, and Italy.

Prior to joining PMI, he was a trainee at the EU Parliament's Communications with Citizens division and an R&D economist for a contractor to Eurostat, the European Union Statistical Office. Tommaso has a business management degree from Università Bocconi, Milan, and FGV (Fundação Getulio Vargas, Sao Paulo, Brazil).

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Branislav Bibic

AREA VICE PRESIDENT SUB-SAHARAN
AFRICA, PMI

Branislav Bibic, Vice President of Philip Morris International (PMI) for sub-Saharan Africa, plays a vital role in leading PMI's transformative vision for a smoke-free future. His mission in the region is clear: to advance the dialogue around tobacco harm reduction and demonstrate the potential of smoke-free products, such as ZYN and IQOS, as viable alternatives for adult smokers who would otherwise continue smoking. Branislav's work emphasises the urgent need for adult smokers to have access to reliable information and scientifically backed alternatives that substantially reduce harmful chemical exposure associated with traditional smoking.

With nearly two decades at PMI, Bibic has gained extensive international experience. Before his current role, he was Managing Director for PMI in Romania, where he successfully drove the growth of IQOS, spearheading PMI's transformation toward smoke-free products in that market. Prior to this, he worked in Switzerland as Director of Corporate Affairs for PMI's global duty-free business. He held his first general management role in his home country, Croatia. Branislav's efforts to promote alternative products to traditional cigarettes are grounded in his extensive operational experience and regulatory acumen developed in various global markets.

Branislav holds an MBA from the University of Oxford, along with additional master's degrees in European studies and engineering. His professional journey began outside the corporate sphere, with early roles in NGOs and government, giving him a well-rounded understanding of regulatory, societal, and business perspectives.

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Under Branislav's leadership, PMI's Sub-Saharan operations—consisting of a workforce of around 600—are structured to encourage innovation, autonomy, and team-driven results. His transformative leadership style relies on inclusion, empowerment, and coaching of his team, though he's ready to take a directive approach when necessary. Known for his strategic foresight and dedication to operational excellence, Branislav is also a staunch advocate for talent development and fostering independent thought within his teams.

Branislav's background shapes his professional philosophy. Having been influenced by both personal and career mentors, he values humility, discipline, and resilience.

Beyond the workplace, Branislav's commitment to societal impact is reflected in his founding of an NGO promoting democratic political culture among young leaders, which today connects over 500 leaders across all sectors. He believes deeply in the responsibility of business to positively influence both individuals and the broader community. His efforts align closely with PMI's goals for public health: while he strongly advocates for smoke-free products, he emphasises that quitting tobacco entirely is always the best choice. However, he also underscores the reality that only a fraction of smokers succeeds in quitting altogether, and for them, scientifically substantiated smoke-free products offer a pragmatic, harm-reduction solution.

Branislav's advocacy for regulatory frameworks that differentiate smoke-free products from traditional cigarettes aligns with PMI's global goals and has proven effective in engaging policymakers. He highlights global precedents, such as the U.S. FDA's Modified Risk Tobacco Product process, as models that South Africa could adapt to encourage better choices among adult smokers while ensuring the rigorous assessment of smoke-free alternatives. He believes that with responsible regulation, PMI can further advance its vision of a smoke-free future for Africa—a goal he sees as both a public health milestone and an irreversible industry transformation.

Bibic resides with his family and enjoys traveling, jazz, and sports such as running and swimming. His pragmatic optimism and commitment to societal improvement make him a crucial figure in PMI's ongoing efforts to reframe the role of tobacco companies in advancing public health.



Andrea Gontkovičová

VICE PRESIDENT CORPORATE AFFAIRS,
SSEA, CIS & MEA, PMI

Ms. Gontkovičová is PMI's Vice President External Affairs South & Southeast Asia (SSEA), Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) & Middle East & Africa (MEA) Region. In this capacity Ms. Gontkovičová oversees external engagement and regulatory developments in PMI's biggest geographical region. Prior to her current appointment, she served as Chairperson of the Board and Managing Director of Philip Morris Czech Republic, with responsibility for the company's business in Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Hungary.

Ms. Gontkovičová started her professional career in 1997 at Philip Morris Slovakia and has since then held positions of increased responsibility in Corporate Affairs, Commercial Development, and Smoke-Free Products Divisions in countries in Central Europe and PMI's Operations Center in Lausanne, Switzerland.

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Themba Mathebula

DIRECTOR EXTERNAL AFFAIRS
SOUTHERN AFRICA, PMI

Themba Mathebula is the Director of External Affairs for Southern Africa at Philip Morris South Africa (PMSA). With over 15 years of experience in corporate external affairs, public policy, and stakeholder engagement, Mathebula is instrumental in driving PMSA's commitment to a smoke-free future.

He has held key roles at Old Mutual and Vodacom Group and holds an MBA from Henley Business School. Mathebula excels in navigating regulatory landscapes and engaging with policymakers and public health stakeholders.

„The path to a smoke-free future requires collaboration and science-backed solutions,” says Mathebula. „I’m excited to work with stakeholders to build awareness on better alternatives for smokers in South Africa.”

Under his leadership, PMSA continues to expand its smoke-free product portfolio, including the launch of IQOS ILUMA and ZYN nicotine pouches, reinforcing the company's commitment to innovative smoke-free alternatives.



Oliver Dickson

BROADCASTER, SABC NEWS

Oliver Dickson is a prominent broadcaster, political analyst, and accomplished debater. Known for his sharp insights and engaging commentary, he anchors current affairs programs on both radio and television, including SAfm and SABC News. A former top-ranked African debater, Oliver is also a published columnist with work featured in The Washington Post, Business Day, and Mail & Guardian. He regularly advises multinational corporations on political strategy and risk in South Africa.

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Jonathan Kwak

SMOKE-FREE PRODUCTS DIRECTOR
SOUTH AFRICA, PMI

A pioneering role in Southern Africa's smoke-free revolution

Jonathan Kwak, the Director of Smoke-Free Products (SFP) at Philip Morris International (PMI), is a pivotal force in the company's vision of a smoke-free future in Southern Africa. Kwak is responsible for the comprehensive success of PMI's smoke-free product portfolio, encompassing strategy, deployment, commercialisation, marketing, and digital and omnichannel strategies.

As the Director of SFP at PMI Southern Africa, Kwak is not only at the forefront of the campaign for a smoke-free future but is also driving innovation, inclusivity, and consumer engagement. The rise of smoke-free technology presents a remarkable opportunity to lead South Africa, and the continent, towards a cigarette-free future. For over a decade, PMI has heavily invested in research and development, using advanced technology and scientific innovation to create less harmful alternatives to traditional cigarettes. With an investment exceeding US\$12.5 billion, PMI has developed and commercialised groundbreaking smoke-free products, offering adult smokers better alternatives to cigarettes.

A legacy of strategic leadership and consumer insights

Kwak's leadership is instrumental in launching pioneering smoke-free products like the *IQOS ILUMA*, a revolutionary heated-tobacco device. This launch in South Africa

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underscores his commitment to providing safer alternatives to traditional cigarettes, guiding the nation towards a healthier future.

South Africa, with one of the highest smoking prevalence rates globally, faces a significant health challenge. Kwak understands the urgency of this issue and is dedicated to switching adult smokers to reduced-risk products. His strategic focus on smoke-free alternatives such as IQOS and the soon-to-be-launched ZYN nicotine pouches offers viable solutions for those unable to quit smoking entirely.

During his 15-year tenure at PMI, Kwak has held various strategic roles, including Head of KT&G Partnership in Switzerland, where he led collaborative innovation in smoke-free products, and Head of Consumer Programmes - Retention in Korea, where he developed loyalty programmes to enhance consumer engagement. He also served as Reduced Risk Products Marketing Manager and Brand Manager, driving brand building, strategy development, and consumer insights to inform business strategies.

Championing innovation and consumer-centric strategies

Kwak's extensive background in consumer insights and business strategy underpins his innovative approach at PMI Southern Africa. His leadership is pivotal in ensuring that adult smokers have access to scientifically substantiated alternatives, aligning with PMI's grand vision of replacing cigarettes. As PMI continues its transformation, Kwak's leadership will be instrumental in driving innovation and promoting healthier choices for smokers. His dedication to this mission promises a significant reduction in smoking prevalence and associated health risks in South Africa.

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Buhle Binta

HEAD OF SCIENTIFIC ENGAGEMENT
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA, PMI

Trailblazing science with purpose: Buhle Binta leading women in STEM and advancing tobacco harm reduction

Meet Buhle Binta, Head of Scientific Engagement for Southern Africa at Philip Morris International (PMI), a scientist who is passionate about using science and technology towards tobacco harm reduction (THR). At the forefront of communicating the science behind PMI's smoke-free future, Binta's goal is to raise awareness and understanding of how these products can reduce harms caused by smoking tobacco and contribute to improved public health.

From its history as a 'tobacco company' PMI is pioneering THR and building its future on smoke-free products that - while not risk-free - are a far better choice than cigarette smoking. Binta joined PMI's External Affairs unit with a wealth of experience and a passion for science. She believes PMI's comprehensive approach – discouraging those who don't smoke from starting, encouraging smokers to quit entirely, and offering smoke-free alternatives to those who choose to continue smoking – demonstrates the company's commitment to phasing out cigarettes. This based on PMI's investments in research and development exceeding US\$12.5 billion on groundbreaking smoke-free products, offering adult smokers better alternatives to cigarettes.

A scientific journey focused on public health

With a background in medical science, Binta has always been driven by research and the need to make a difference in public health. „A decade ago, data on tobacco harm reduction was scarce,” she says. „Now, science is crucial to our mission.” PMI has made significant strides in publishing and reviewing scientific research, with over 511 peer-reviewed publications since 2008. Binta is proud to be part of the leadership of a company accumulating real-world evidence to pave the way for potential breakthroughs for smoke free products.

Binta’s professional journey in science began at the University of the Witwatersrand, at the school of Clinical microbiology and infectious diseases, focusing oral microbiology. She then joined the National Health Laboratory Service as a medical scientist, conducting microbiological research and outreach activities to support occupational health services in South Africa. Binta, further expanded her experience at the South African Health Products Regulatory Authority, honing her skills in regulatory affairs and stakeholder relations. Throughout her journey, she gained valuable insights into public health and efforts to reduce the burden of disease in South Africa. However, she also recognized the challenges that women in science often face.

Championing Women in STEM

Binta’s own experiences as a woman in Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics (STEM) fuel her advocacy. „Women in STEM often face challenges such as limited work opportunities and a lack of mentorship,” she says. She emphasises the importance of encouraging young women in STEM, establishing mentorship programmes, and creating robust support systems to ensure equal access to opportunities.

While Binta herself doesn’t smoke, she believes in offering smokers a better alternative towards better health. „Smoke-free products can complement existing measures to discourage cigarette smoking ,” she explains.

Binta’s vision for the future is clear: positive change in public health, a smoke-free future, and empowered women in STEM.



Clement Diarga BASSE

SCIENTIFIC ENGAGEMENT MANAGER
SUB-SAHARN AFRICA, PMI)

Clément Diarga BASSE is a Medical doctor with over 10 years' experience, specialized in Occupational Health and has certifications in Public Health.

He has worked in both public and private health sector as a physician. And has been a laureate of multiple professional development programs, notably in Burkina Faso / Ghana (West African Health Organization), Belgium (University "Libre de Bruxelles"), Japan (University of Nagasaki) and the United States of America (University of Minnesota).

He has worked at operational level in Ziguinchor, south-western Region in Senegal – and at decision-making level – Headquarters of the Ministry of Health in Senegal.

He has also worked over 6 years in the humanitarian field with the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in charge of the health of ICRC staff, based in Dakar, Bangkok, DRC Congo and Geneva, overseeing respectively 15 countries in Africa and 20 countries in Asia and Pacific.

His sensitivity to vulnerability and human rights led him to write a book on "street children in Senegal" published in March 2021.



Yael Ossowski

DEPUTY DIRECTOR, CONSUMER
CHOICE CENTER

French-Canadian/American living in Vienna, Yaël Ossowski is a consumer and technology advocate, journalist, and writer. He is deputy director at the Consumer Choice Center.

Since 2010, he has worked as a journalist, policy analyst, and grassroots organizer both in Europe and North America. He was previously Watchdog.org's Florida Bureau Chief, chief Spanish translator, and national investigative reporter from 2012-2015, and Senior Development Officer at Students For Liberty.

His articles have appeared in USA Today, The Hill, The Chicago Tribune, Washington Examiner, La Presse, Le Journal de Montréal, Charlotte Observer, Miami Herald, The Philadelphia Inquirer, Detroit News, Reason Magazine, American Spectator, Huffington Post, FoxNews.com, and much more. He has had over 1,000 articles published in newspapers, magazines, and online outlets.

He is also a fellow at the Bitcoin Policy Institute.

He studied at Concordia University in Montréal and the University of Vienna, and received an MA in Philosophy, Politics, Economics (PPE) at the CEVRO Institute in Prague.

Born in Québec and raised in North Carolina, he splits his time between Austria and North Carolina.



Dr Mercy Korir

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER & EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, WILLOW HEALTH MEDIA

Dr. Mercy Korir is an accomplished Medical Doctor, award-winning Journalist, and Business Executive whose expertise bridges healthcare, media, business and marketing strategy. A pioneer in medical journalism, she is the Co-Founder, CEO and Editor-in-Chief of Willow Health Media, Kenya's first- ever niche health media house—supported by the Gates Foundation—shaping the future of digital journalism and creating a centre of excellence in health journalism for Kenya and Africa.

Previously, she founded Kenya's first-ever Multimedia Health and Science Desk at Standard Group PLC, revolutionizing health reporting across TV, newspaper radio, and digital platforms. Her exceptional contributions during the COVID-19 pandemic earned her **The Presidential Order of Service – Uzalendo Award (2020)**, recognizing her vital role in public health communication.

Beyond her impact in media and healthcare, Dr. Korir is a visionary leader driving innovation at the intersection of health, business, and communication and disrupting old norms, paving way for the future, today.

She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Medicine and Surgery, Master of Arts in Communication Studies, and a Master of Business Administration (Finance & Marketing) alongside specialized leadership and journalism training. An avid hiker and explorer of megastructures, she brings the same curiosity and passion to her work, ensuring that health and science storytelling remain both engaging and transformative.



Dr Esthras Tlou Moloko

MEDICAL PRACTITIONER, NUMOLUX
GROUP, FORMER SPECIAL ADVISOR
TO THE MINISTER OF HEALTH, SOUTH
AFRICA

Dr Esthras Tlou Confidence Moloko is a private Medical Practitioner or Physician, a consultant. He is an alumnus of the Medical University of Southern Africa (MEDUNSA). He graduated with a Bachelor of Science (Medical) and Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery qualification. He has been part of the South African national health leadership collective from 1980 to date. He was the coordinator of the internal chapter of the ANC NEC Department of Manpower Development (DMD).

He is a consultant with a history of providing services to various local and international projects and institutions. He is a senior officer of the South African Military Health Service (SAMHS) Reserve Force.

He has a wealth of experience of the public and private health sector having worked at all levels of the public sector as a student, medical officer, registrar and senior government official in four of South Africa's provinces and in the Ministry of Health overseeing all provincial departments of health. He was the Superintendent General and Head of Department of Health and Social Welfare; Chairperson of the Provincial Technical Committee of the Social Cluster in Mpumalanga, South Africa; a member of the Forum of South Africa's Directors General (FOSAD); Strategic and Technical Adviser to the former Deputy Minister of Health, the late Dr Molefi Sefularo; and Special Adviser to the Minister of Health, Dr Aaron Motsoaledi, his last position in government relinquished in December 2012.