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British American Tobacco joins forces with Kuwaiti Co-Ops to combat underage smoking

British American Tobacco joined forces with prominent cooperative societies to launch the *Partners in Responsibility* youth smoking prevention campaign in Kuwait. The campaign, which aims to raise awareness of laws that regulate underage smoking, was launched on the 4th of May 2008 in all outlets of Dasmah & Bnaid Al-Qar, Bayan, Al-Adeiliyyah, Kaifan and Al-Rawda & Hawally cooperative societies.

Bassem Bekdache, Head of Corporate and Regulatory Affairs for British American Tobacco in the GCC stated that “We hope that the *Partners in Responsibility* campaign will help increase awareness of the law. We take the matter of youth smoking prevention very seriously and are backing up words with actions. In addition to Kuwait, this campaign has also been rolled out in Bahrain and Qatar with more countries to follow by the end of 2008”

Dasmah & Bnaid Al-Qar CO-OP Society General Manager, Mohamed Ahmed Ashour, echoed the initiative’s objective “We are sending a message that we don’t sell cigarettes to under 21’s. It’s the Law”.

All participating retail outlets will display stickers, posters and badges at cash counters and tobacco selling areas, communicating the campaign’s message. “We are pleased to support the *Partners in Responsibility* initiative which allows our employees in all our branches the opportunity to play a role in combating the problem of underage smoking”, says Salem Zaher al Shamri, representative of Al Rawda & Hawally Co-Op Society.

Staff members from the participating co-ops have undergone training to ensure the success of this initiative in each branch and to raise awareness of the minimum smoking age laws in Kuwait.

Ahmad Mohamed Shahata, General Manager of Bayan Cooperative Society expressed his view on the campaign “Underage smoking is a serious issue that needs to be addressed by all interested parties in society, we see a real benefit for our local community with this effort” and Mashari Fahd Al Bunuan, Chairman of Kaifan Co-Operative Society added “We will be distributing information leaflets to all our customers with a message stating that the co-op does not sell cigarettes to under 21s.”

The law in Kuwait bans the sale of tobacco products to persons under 21 years of age and stipulates a fine of up to 50 KD for those who violate the law. A study has shown that almost fifty percent of all retail staff are unaware of the minimum smoking age and most were unaware of the penalty.

Abdullah Al Subaie, Manager of Al-Adeiliyyah Co-Operative Society, commented "The management board of the cooperative society takes this matter extremely seriously to protect its valued customers".

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Notes to editors

About British American Tobacco

As the world's second largest quoted tobacco group by global market share, with brands sold in more than 180 markets, British American Tobacco is present in the Middle East with over 550 employees and a portfolio of 20 brands. In 2006, the BAT Group reported that it had run 144 youth smoking prevention programmes around the world with over half of them focused on preventing under age access at the point of-sale.

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