PRESS RELEASE

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Comments from Swedish Match with reference to the Supreme Court ruling in the Ann Gustafsson case.

It should be stressed that the Supreme Court has not reached a decision on the actual facts of the issue, but has simply remanded the case to the District Court for the requisite processing. The plaintiff has, in other words, been obliged to litigate for an entire year, simply to bring about a normal judicial process. This actually says everything there is to say about the legal conditions for these proceedings, says Bo Aulin, General Counsel at Swedish Match, in a comment on the Supreme Court's decision to remand the case between Ann Gustafsson and Swedish Match to the District Court for the issuance of a summons and further processing in the normal fashion.

At the time when Ann Gustafsson began to smoke - and for the majority of the period during which she continued to smoke - the tobacco operations now conducted by Swedish Match were owned, controlled and run in Sweden by the Swedish State. It is the Swedish Parliament that has laid down the rules governing the ways in which tobacco products may be marketed and sold. The rules have come about in the full knowledge of the health risks associated with smoking, including the risk of lung cancer. These rules state that the marketing and sale of tobacco products is permitted. Adult individuals are, under the same rules, entitled to choose for themselves whether they want to smoke or not.

The company has always complied with the rules imposed by Society. This was the case during the time when Parliament and the Government owned and controlled the company, and this is the case now. The fact that ownership was handed over to private interests in the early 1990s changes nothing.

This case has purely political objectives, and is based on an exceptionally fragile legal foundation. It has nothing in common with Swedish legal tradition, says Bo Aulin in conclusion.

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