



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

EXECUTIVE BOARD
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Tobacco Free Initiative

Report by the Director-General

BACKGROUND

1. The present and future impact of tobacco on health is the primary reason for giving explicit, sustained, and strong support to global tobacco control. Overall, it is estimated that the current 3.5 million tobacco-related deaths a year will rise to about 10 million in 2030, with 70% of these deaths occurring in developing countries.

2. Current and future threats, combined with the availability of successful tools for action, led to the establishment of the Cabinet project, the Tobacco Free Initiative. The long-term mission of the project is to decrease the prevalence of global tobacco use. The following goals will guide the work of the Tobacco Free Initiative:

- stimulate global support for evidence-based tobacco control policies and actions;
- build new, and strengthen existing, partnerships for action;
- heighten awareness of the need to deal with tobacco at all levels of society;
- accelerate implementation of national, regional and global strategies;
- commission policy research to support rapid, sustained and innovative action;
- mobilize resources to support required actions.

3. The Tobacco Free Initiative employs the following principles of work: matrix management across clusters, throughout regions and with other partners; subcontracting of activities to other clusters using the core project budget; and maximum decentralization of functions to partners, with WHO maintaining policy leadership.

4. The work of the core support group in Geneva comprises the following areas:

- building and strengthening national and regional capacity;

- information management: aims to establish a solid evidence base and develop a global surveillance and electronic information exchange system;
- international framework convention for tobacco control: carries out work related to analysis of industry actions, political mapping, and the trade and international legal aspects of tobacco control, and provides technical and secretariat functions associated with development of the convention;
- external liaison and advocacy: focuses on media advocacy, coordination of tobacco control within the United Nations system, mobilization of nongovernmental organizations, and interaction with private sector groupings, in particular the pharmaceutical industry, the entertainment business, media, and leisure groups.

5. To implement the above activities, the Tobacco Free Initiative collaborates with other WHO programmes and is building up external partnerships. The effectiveness of these new partnerships is being tested in an international project focusing on tobacco control activities among young people, which brings together the global and regional levels of WHO, and selected country offices, UNICEF, World Bank, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the International Development Research Centre, the Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids and numerous other nongovernmental organizations. This project is funded through a US\$ 2.8 million grant from the United Nations Foundation, Inc., the largest single contribution given for international tobacco control activities.

ISSUES

6. A disproportionate gap exists between the resources allocated to tobacco control activities and the burden of disease attributable to tobacco. WHO - Member States and Secretariat - need to mobilize more funds for development and maintenance of tobacco control capability, research, and surveillance. These efforts will have a crucial impact on the global tobacco pandemic.

7. The Forty-ninth World Health Assembly in May 1996 adopted resolution WHA49.17 requesting the Director-General "to initiate the development of a framework convention [for tobacco control] in accordance with Article 19 of the WHO Constitution". Preliminary discussions with a number of governments, international lawyers, public health specialists, and trade analysts indicate that a fast-track approach for the development and negotiation of a tobacco control convention is desirable and feasible. The following steps in an accelerated work plan have been identified:

- a series of technical meetings will be convened over the next six to 12 months, during which time national framework convention commissions will be established in several countries to collaborate with Member States in building up support for the convention;
- the Executive Board may wish to consider recommending to the Health Assembly the establishment of mechanisms of consultation with Member States on development of the convention during the prenegotiation phase. One option could be to establish an *ad hoc* task force or working group, open to all Member States, to facilitate consultation with all interested parties before negotiations on the convention. Also, during this phase, selected Member States may wish to host intergovernmental meetings focusing on particular technical themes relating to the convention;

- a resolution to establish an intergovernmental negotiating committee could be considered by the Fifty-third World Health Assembly. This would signal the launch of the formal negotiating phase.

ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

8. The Executive Board is invited to consider the following draft resolution:

The Executive Board,

Recognizing the leadership of the Organization in the field of tobacco control, and having considered the report of the Director-General on the Tobacco Free Initiative,¹

RECOMMENDS to the Fifty-second World Health Assembly the adoption of the following resolution:

The Fifty-second World Health Assembly,

Deeply concerned by the escalation of smoking and other forms of tobacco use worldwide, which resulted in the loss of at least 3.5 million lives in 1998 and is expected to cause at least 10 million deaths a year by 2030 if the pandemic is not controlled;

Having considered the report of the Director-General on the Tobacco Free Initiative;

Recalling and reaffirming resolution WHA49.17 requesting the Director-General to develop a framework convention for tobacco control in accordance with Article 19 of the WHO Constitution;

Recognizing the need for multisectoral strategies, including the involvement of other multilateral organizations and nongovernmental organizations to foster international consensus and action on development of the framework convention for tobacco control;

Mindful of the many resource constraints faced by a number of countries in participating in the development and implementation of the framework convention for tobacco control;

Aware of the urgent need to speed up work on the proposed framework convention for tobacco control so that it may serve as a basis for multilateral cooperation and collective action on tobacco control,

1. URGES Member States:

(1) to give high priority to implementation of the accelerated work plan for development of the WHO framework convention for tobacco control;²

¹ Document EB103/5.

² See document EB103/5.

(2) to contribute the extrabudgetary resources and cooperation necessary to implement the accelerated work plan;

(3) to consider establishment of an *ad hoc* task force or working group, open to all Member States, to other multilateral organizations, and to nongovernmental organizations in official relations with WHO, in order to facilitate consultation on development of the WHO framework convention for tobacco control before the instrument is negotiated;

(4) to host intergovernmental meetings to address specific issues, for example public health matters and other technical matters relating to negotiation of the proposed framework convention, and which may serve as a forum for the *ad hoc* task force or working group referred to above;

2. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to complete at all levels of the Organization the technical work required to launch negotiations on the WHO framework convention for tobacco control;

(2) to intensify support to the least developed nations and other Member States experiencing the greatest difficulty in participating in development of the framework convention for tobacco control, and to make particular efforts to mobilize and coordinate international resources in support of participation of such countries in development of the convention;

(3) to collaborate with Member States, organizations of the United Nations system, other intergovernmental, nongovernmental and voluntary organizations, and the media to support development of the convention as set forth in the accelerated work plan;

(4) to collaborate with interested Member States in hosting intergovernmental meetings on the proposed convention;

(5) to urge Member States to facilitate interministerial dialogue in order to deal with the multisectoral components of global tobacco control, which should be addressed by the proposed convention;

(6) to collaborate with Member States in establishing national commissions to support the development of the proposed convention, to promote debate, to assess which national issues should be addressed in treaty negotiations, and to provide public information about the proposed convention.

(7) to report to the Fifty-third World Health Assembly on the progress achieved in development of the WHO framework convention for tobacco control.

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