



# WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

EXECUTIVE BOARD  
105th Session  
Provisional agenda item 3.2

EB105/37  
23 November 1999

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## Tobacco Free Initiative

### Report by the Director-General

#### INTRODUCTION

1. This document, submitted in accordance with resolution WHA43.16, provides a biennial report on progress and effectiveness of tobacco control in Member States.
2. Since the establishment of the Tobacco Free Initiative as a Cabinet project, heightened priority has been given to the interdependence between the regional, national and global levels of tobacco control, especially because the tobacco epidemic is becoming increasingly globalized. The current report therefore updates information on these three levels of tobacco control activities.<sup>1</sup>
3. Progress has been made in the following areas: support to countries, the process for establishing a framework convention on tobacco control,<sup>2</sup> coordination within the United Nations system, resource mobilization, and media advocacy. Specific activities during the period are outlined below.

#### COUNTRY SUPPORT AND ACTION

4. **Legislative action.** Technical support was provided to Kenya and South Africa, and requests for support have been received from Sri Lanka and Uganda. An international panel of lawyers is being drawn up to offer technical support to Member States. A website containing national legislation for tobacco control has been set up, and a framework for assessing the effectiveness of legislation is being formulated.
5. **Litigation.** Various types of tobacco litigation are under way in at least 15 countries, including personal injury class action litigation in Australia, health cost recovery litigation in Canada, and public interest writ petitions in India. WHO is exploring options for litigation with selected countries.
6. **Youth activities.** The Tobacco Free Initiative continued to coordinate the joint WHO/UNICEF project, "Building alliances and taking action to create a generation of tobacco-free children and youth", supported by the United Nations Foundation. The project has now entered an activating phase

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<sup>1</sup> Further information on project activities is available at website [www.who.int/toh](http://www.who.int/toh)

<sup>2</sup> The report on the first meeting of the working group on the framework convention is contained in document EB105/11.

in nine countries. An international consultation on “Tobacco and youth: what in the world works?” was held in Singapore from 28 to 30 September 1999 with participants from over 30 countries.

7. **Surveillance.** In collaboration with the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the Global Youth Tobacco Survey has been implemented in 11 countries. It will be extended to a further 36 countries in 2000.

8. **Media.** “Tobacco kills – don’t be duped”, a project on media and advocacy for policy change involving a broad network of strategic partners and sponsored by the United Nations Foundation, was launched in California, United States of America, on 5 November 1999 with CDC and the California Health Department. Pilot programmes are being carried out in 15 countries. Using the same slogan, World No-Tobacco Day 2000 will be a key component of the project.

9. **Economics.** The World Bank report, *Curbing the epidemic: governments and the economics of tobacco control*,<sup>1</sup> will be translated into all WHO’s official languages and into Japanese and Portuguese by June 2000. Teams of economists, lawyers and tobacco control experts will visit selected countries to conduct press conferences and seminars and to meet ministries of finance. The World Bank is conducting economic country analysis and producing guidelines and tools to help in-country researchers. Studies are under way in six countries and more are planned.

## REGIONAL PROGRESS

10. **Africa.** The Regional Office for Africa, in collaboration with the Government of Togo and the Tobacco Free Initiative, hosted an intercountry meeting on the contribution of parliamentarians to tobacco control in the Region (Lomé, 6 to 8 October 1999). The parliamentarians adopted a declaration outlining their strong commitment to tobacco control. They agreed to work towards harmonized legislative and fiscal strategies, and strongly supported the proposed framework convention on tobacco control.

11. **The Americas.** The Regional Office for the Americas and the Tobacco Free Initiative sponsored a meeting (Chile, August 1999) of Latin American parliamentarians, focusing on such issues as tobacco legislation, the policy process, litigation, and the framework convention. A regional workshop (Venezuela, December 1999) will help to build up skills in project management and communication strategies for advocacy.

12. **South-East Asia.** The international conference, “Global tobacco control law: towards a WHO framework convention on tobacco control” (New Delhi, 7 to 9 January 2000), will focus on issues in the framework convention process from the viewpoint of developing countries.

13. **Europe.** The Action Plan for a Tobacco-Free Europe has strong links to the proposed framework convention. A second meeting of the Committee for a Tobacco-Free Europe was held in October 1999, and a strategy was developed to build up momentum for the ministerial conference to be held in Poland in 2001. The conference is expected to close with a declaration in support of the proposed framework convention. Information meetings on product regulation and on cessation were held in Finland in early October.

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<sup>1</sup> Washington, D.C., The World Bank, 1999.

14. **Eastern Mediterranean.** A new regional action plan was drawn up during an intercountry meeting (Alexandria, June 1999). To move the framework convention process forward, the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean is seeking to work with the Arab League, and exploring mechanisms to reach countries outside the League.

15. **Western Pacific.** A regional workshop for focal points was held in August 1999 with participants from 33 countries of the Western Pacific Region. A regional action plan was approved by the Regional Committee in October 1999, and a regional primer on the Tobacco Free Initiative and the proposed framework convention was prepared in November. Projects at country or subregional levels are progressing, including meetings on the framework convention process for Pacific Islands and professional development workshops on topics related to tobacco control.

## GLOBAL PROGRESS

16. The work of the project is based on the principles that global action benefits national policies and, conversely, that national actions build up capacity that in turn facilitates participation in global tobacco control networks.

17. **Women.** More than 300 participants, including women's leaders, representatives of nongovernmental organizations and the media, health scientists and policy-makers, attended the international conference, "Making a difference to tobacco and health: avoiding the tobacco epidemic in women and youth" (Kobe, Japan, 14 to 18 November 1999).

18. **Global agenda.** A global agenda for tobacco control research was developed in close collaboration with Research for International Tobacco Control (International Development Research Centre), the Fogarty International Center, the United States National Institutes for Health, CDC and the United States Food and Drug Administration.

19. **Focal point.** The United Nations Ad Hoc Interagency Task Force, under WHO's leadership, replaces the former United Nations system focal point for tobacco at UNCTAD. The first meeting of the Task Force (New York, 29 to 30 September 1999), attended by representatives of 15 organizations, identified the principal themes for future work, namely, agricultural diversification, dissemination of Task Force information to country level, economics, employment, environmental tobacco smoke, the proposed framework convention on tobacco control, regulation of tobacco products, risk-taking behaviour, trade, and tobacco use among women.

20. **WHO inquiry.** On 12 October 1999, the Director-General called for a preliminary inquiry into whether the tobacco industry has exercised undue influence over United Nations system-wide tobacco control efforts. Dr Thomas Zeltner, member of the Executive Board and Director of the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health, was appointed to lead a committee of independent experts for the inquiry.

21. **Regulation.** WHO and the Government of Norway will host the conference, "Advancing knowledge on regulating tobacco products" (Oslo, 9 to 11 February 2000), which will provide a forum for exchanging scientific information, defining public health goals, and identifying priority research areas. It is expected to provide advice on whether a protocol on regulation should be drawn up as part of the framework convention process.

22. **Policy/Strategy Advisory Committee.** The Policy/Strategy Advisory Committee of the Tobacco Free Initiative (established in January 1999) met twice in 1999 to advise on the broad direction of the project, key political issues, policy implications of recommendations on scientific matters, and other matters requested by the Director-General.