



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

FIFTY-FOURTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY
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Tobacco control: other activities

Report by the Secretariat

1. An inquiry on tobacco industry documents by a **committee of experts** appointed by the Director-General, into whether WHO's global tobacco control policies had been adversely affected by tobacco industry practices aimed at influencing its funding, policy and research priorities, concluded in August 2000 that tobacco companies had planned and implemented global strategies to discredit and impede WHO's efforts to carry out its mission. In all, the committee made 58 recommendations.
2. One of the key recommendations was that WHO should formally vet prospective experts, consultants and advisers for possible conflict of interest. WHO has accordingly introduced a declaration of interest form to be signed before appointments are made.
3. Among its recommendations, the committee proposed that WHO should develop a communications campaign to support the proposed framework convention on tobacco control and counter any campaign of opposition by tobacco companies. WHO should also monitor tobacco industry activities and make regular public reports on any continuing misconduct.
4. Two additional recommendations related to the Health Assembly; specifically, to submit to the Health Assembly, for discussion by Member States, the questions of whether:
 - Member States have in place adequate mechanisms to ensure the transparency of affiliations between delegates to the Health Assembly and tobacco companies; Member States should be encouraged to take any additional steps necessary to avoid inappropriate affiliations;
 - current procedures for recognizing organizations as nongovernmental organizations include adequate mechanisms to make transparent any affiliations between a nongovernmental organization and tobacco companies.
5. WHO has made substantial progress in working with other United Nations agencies in the formulation and promotion of tobacco control initiatives. The **United Nations Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Task Force on Tobacco Control**, set up in 1999 under WHO's leadership, and comprising bodies and organizations of the United Nations system, as well as WTO, has helped to initiate new interagency partnerships on the economics of tobacco control and on supply, demand and trade issues. A technical meeting on the economic transition in tobacco manufacturing and agriculture will be held in Kobe, Japan, later in 2001. This meeting will highlight the technical work of Task Force members as follows: the results of the FAO study on tobacco agriculture and supply, the output of the ILO bidi study, other research related to alternative livelihoods, and the findings of the World Bank's studies on demand-side country cases and privatization.

6. As a result of the **expansion of country support**, the Organization, both at headquarters and in the regional offices, now has enhanced ability to respond to requests from countries, particularly in relation to legislation, surveillance and media advocacy. With the World Bank and IMF, it is also providing support in areas related to the economics of tobacco control.

7. WHO held a consultation on litigation and public inquiries as public health tools for tobacco control (Amman, February 2001). At the meeting, the Director of the Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean released the first part of a two-part report documenting the efforts of tobacco companies to undermine tobacco control in the Region.

8. WHO helped to support the attendance of a number of emerging leaders in tobacco control from developing countries at the **11th World Conference on Tobacco or Health** (Chicago, United States of America, 6 to 11 August 2000). In addition, a seed-grant programme was established for the purpose of awarding small grants to scholars from developing countries who had prepared implementation plans during their skill-building sessions at the conference.

9. The **Scientific Advisory Committee on Tobacco Product Regulation** was established by WHO as a result of the international conference “Advancing knowledge on regulating tobacco products” (Oslo, February 2000). The Committee, composed of international and national experts, was set up to facilitate access to scientific information and to guide international policy development in the area of tobacco product regulation. The Committee’s work focuses on product modification, disclosure of contents, measurement of contents, nicotine regulation, and communication of risk after examination of data on tar and nicotine levels. It will evaluate and make recommendations on the most appropriate and effective regulatory frameworks for tobacco products. As part of the Committee’s first meeting (Geneva, 12 and 13 October 2000), WHO invited selected tobacco companies to provide information on their perspective on product modification and their efforts to reduce the harm caused by tobacco products. At its second meeting (Atlanta, 31 January to 2 February 2001), the Committee discussed possible methods of interaction with the tobacco industry and reviewed regulatory standards in various countries. Two tobacco companies presented their views on tobacco-product regulation.

10. **World No-Tobacco Day 2001** will centre on a pivotal issue in tobacco control, passive smoking. Recognizing that some of the most effective and sustainable clean indoor air policies have occurred at the local level, WHO is urging mayors of cities around the world to launch “Clear the Air” campaigns.

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