

## **The seventh session of the Conference of the Parties (COP7) to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) concluded in New Delhi**

The seventh session of the Conference of the Parties (COP7) to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) concluded in New Delhi today. Several significant decisions were adopted in the course of the six-day session.

During an intense week of discussions delegates addressed the longest agenda of any COP, indicating the enthusiasm of Parties and the growing role of tobacco control within areas of development and human rights, as well as public health.

The decisions reached today, shaping the future of the Convention, is set against the stark reality that without strong tobacco control measures tobacco will kill about 1 billion people in the 21st Century. By 2030, over 80 percent of the world's tobacco-related mortality will be in low- and- middle income countries.

### **Tobacco industry interference**

Parties continue to be concerned, as expressed at COP7, by the tobacco industry's persistent attempts to infiltrate and manipulate the workings of the Convention and the outcome of COP7. Noting with concern that the tobacco industry's tactics at the international level affects implementation of the Convention at a country level, COP7 urged Parties to intensify multisectoral actions and cooperation to address strategies of the tobacco industry to undermine or subvert tobacco control. It calls on Parties to remain vigilant of tobacco industry efforts to undermine the implementation of WHO FCTC.

The Head of the Convention Secretariat, Dr Vera Luiza da Costa e Silva said,

*"The long hours of debate and planning has produced a strong roadmap for global tobacco control for the future. Despite all the hard work by the Parties it is sad to see the interest, yet again, being promoted in the room. It is determined to undermine and distract us from our goal – to fight against the tobacco epidemic that not only damages health and kills people, but also impoverishes those living in low- to middle- income countries."*

### **Electronic nicotine delivery systems and electronic non-nicotine delivery systems**

The decision on electronic nicotine delivery systems and electronic non-nicotine delivery systems (ENDS/ENNDS) invites Parties that have not yet banned the importation, sale and distribution of ENDS/ENNDS to consider either prohibition or regulating such products.

Parties called for further unbiased, commercially independent and scientifically-based research to ascertain the overall health impact and long-term public health risks of ENDS/ENNDS. Some Parties expressed concern at the use of health claims as a marketing tool for ENDS/ENNDS. There was also consideration that all the different devices and delivery systems should be regulated under national legislation in the same way as drugs or tobacco products, while others called for them to be banned outright. Further evidence-based scientific research is to be prepared.

### **Economically sustainable alternatives to tobacco growing**

The decision encourages Parties not growing tobacco to not start. It urges Parties to adopt a whole-of-government approach and participation with stakeholders to promote alternatives to tobacco growing and

avoid tobacco industry obstruction in programmes meant for welfare and diversification of tobacco growing and workers and the protection of the environment, as appropriate in the national context.

Dr Vera Luiza da Costa e Silva told delegates during the closing ceremony,

*“We have an obligation to protect vulnerable members of the tobacco production chain – the farmers. But we do that not through encouraging more growing, as the tobacco industry does, but through the development of solid, sustainable alternatives that will promote a better future for farmers and their families.”*

### **“Liability”**

Parties recognize scientific evidence has established that tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke causes death, disease and disability. The Parties adopt the report of the expert group, including a specifically designed toolkit, as a mechanism of assistance to those Parties that may require assistance in developing civil liability. It encourages Parties to consider options, including developing their legislation or liability procedures, as appropriate, and increasing their international cooperation in order to strengthen implementation of Article 19 of the WHO FCTC.

### **Addressing gender-specific risks when developing tobacco control strategies**

The Parties have requested further research on evidence on tobacco use and tobacco control and its consequences among girls and women, as well as boys and men, with special attention to vulnerable groups, in respect to social determinants of health.

### **International cooperation, support for global NCD targets and human rights**

The Parties recognize that tobacco control is related to a number of Sustainable Development Goals and targets including those related to the environment and human rights. The Parties requested the Convention Secretariat to strengthen the treaty relationship with other international agencies and frameworks, enhancing synergies towards common global health and development goals.

The Impact Assessment report, presented to COP7, reveals how implementation of the WHO FCTC is gaining force around the world. Where it is applied prevalence drops and so does demand for tobacco.