



The 350+ members of FCA poised for COP-4

The FCA has been committed to a treaty to address the global tobacco epidemic since it emerged as an alliance from a small group of like minded civil-society organisations in 1999. Today we are a network of more than 350 health and tobacco control organisations across more than 100 countries. We choose to associate together freely at this and similar conferences in order to share expertise and resources and to discuss issues and events. At the same time, having these organisations represented under a single umbrella makes it easier for the COP to interact with civil society. All FCA member organisations retain their full independence. We are a strictly non-partisan network, being concerned only with the implementation and development of the provisions of the Convention.

Only after years of advocacy did the world's governments recognise the burden imposed by tobacco on global human health, and they decided to act by creating the FCTC, the first global public health treaty. The efforts of non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which were encouraged by the WHO to get engaged in the FCTC, were recognised in the treaty itself: its guiding principles state (Article 4.7), that "the participation of civil society is essential in achieving the objective of the convention and its protocols".

Since 1999 FCA has grown immensely, and today we count among our members more than 350 organisations from more than 100 countries in all WHO regions. A number of those organisations are represented at this COP, coming together under the FCA umbrella: roughly 20 from the AFRO region, 5 from EMRO, 20 from EURO, 6 from SEARO, 7 from WPRO and 34 from AMRO, as well as international organisations, some with their own Observer status with the COP.

We believe our accomplishments have been substantial in the last decade. FCA and its members have: supported countries' efforts in becoming Parties to the FCTC, and provided technical expertise to government representatives involved in the treaty process; assisted countries to develop and adopt effective, evidence-based guidelines on implementation of the FCTC; ensured the presence of NGOs from across the world at all FCTC-related negotiations and meetings, and provided grants to enable participants from low-and middle-income countries to be actively involved in all FCTC activities.

FCA, through its member representatives, has participated in all six INB sessions of the WHO FCTC, as the two open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group (IGWG) sessions, dozens of regional treaty meetings and several annual meetings of the World Health Assembly. Since the Treaty's entry into force, FCA has participated in all three sessions of the COP, all expert working group meetings on the various WHO FCTC articles as agreed by the COP, all four negotiating sessions of the INB on a Protocol on Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products and its related meetings, and other additional regional meetings organised by the Convention Secretariat.

In its efforts to support the Convention's COP and subsidiary bodies, the FCA's Regional Coordinators, working closely with FCA members, organised regional, sub-regional and national trainings and workshops across the globe. These brought together government officials, WHO, and civil society representatives to raise awareness and develop capacity on issues related to the ratification, implementation, monitoring and enforcement of the WHO FCTC. In this process, FCA's civil society members across the globe have successfully worked hand-in-hand with governments, supplying educational material, holding delegate briefings, providing tobacco control expertise, and offering in-country and regional strategic support.

We are proud that we have been able to be a positive influence at previous COPs and INBs, which resulted, among other things, in adoption of guidelines on a comprehensive ban on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship and on the use of large, pictorial and effective tobacco warnings. There is ample scope for continued success in the future. In coming years, FCA will focus on securing sustainable funding for the implementation of the FCTC, including by exploiting opportunities such as the UN Summit on Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs, for which tobacco is the No. 1 risk factor) and by promoting access to existing funding mechanisms. We will push for stronger implementation of the FCTC at the national level, and emphasise compliance and compliance monitoring, starting with the launch later today of FCA's *Tobacco Watch* (formerly the *FCTC Monitor*).