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Meeting agrees advances to fight tobacco epidemic; governments must make them an immediate priority

MOSCOW, 18 October 2014 –Decisions made this week in Moscow will save hundreds of millions of lives if governments work to implement them immediately, said the Framework Convention Alliance on Saturday.

Topping their work plans should be implementing guidelines that will assist governments to apply taxes to tobacco more effectively. It is generally accepted that raising the price of tobacco products, including through tax increases, is the most effective way to cut usage, and to discourage young people from trying smoking.

One recent study found that tripling excise tax on tobacco worldwide would reduce smoking by 1/3, avoid over 200 million premature deaths, and raise US\$100 billion more in revenue.

The guidelines, for Article 6 of the WHO Framework Convention in Tobacco Control (FCTC) recommend that Parties establish coherent long-term policies on their tobacco taxation structure. They are based on the principle that “Parties should implement the simplest and most efficient system that meets their public health and fiscal needs, and taking into account their national circumstances.”

“FCTC Parties have been working on guidelines for four years. Meanwhile, South Africa, Brazil, France, the Philippines and the United Kingdom are just some of the countries that have raised tobacco taxes and reduced smoking and the diseases and deaths that it causes,” said FCA Director Laurent Huber.

“Other countries must now follow suit, if we are to have any hope of the world reaching, by 2025, the 30 percent tobacco use reduction target governments set at the 2013 World Health Assembly,” he added.

Delegates to the sixth session of the FCTC Conference of the Parties gathered to confront one of the world’s deadliest ever epidemics. Tobacco use killed 100 million people in the 20th century and, if trends do not change, will be responsible for the deaths of 1 billion people this century. Most of those projected deaths will occur in low and middle-income countries, where the tobacco industry has shifted its efforts to recruit new smokers.

COP6 also adopted recommendations from a working group that studied ways to accelerate the Convention’s impact on the ground. Topping that list is putting a price tag on FCTC implementation — both the cost of action and the cost of inaction, in health and economic terms.

Delegates agreed it is time to move beyond diagnosing problems towards planning specific solutions, including how governments can ensure that tobacco control is a priority for all parts of their administrations, not just health ministries.



In their morning plenary session Saturday, delegates were also expected to agree ways to strengthen measures against interference by the tobacco industry in governments' health policy-making.

COP6 brought together representatives from the 179 Parties to the FCTC, which represent nearly 90 percent of the world's people, as well as non-Parties and international and non-government organisations from around the world.

FCA represents nearly 500 civil society organisations in more than 100 countries devoted to improving the FCTC and increasing its impact on the ground.