

STATEMENT OF FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ALLIANCE SIXTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE WHO REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR EUROPE

Framework Convention Alliance (FCA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to discussions at the Sixty-fifth Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe. We know that if we want to reduce tobacco consumption in the European Region, we will need political will and leadership as well as concerted actions. This is why FCA fully supports the **draft resolution** EUR/RC65/Conf.Doc./6 Roadmap of actions to strengthen the implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in the European Region 2015–2025: making tobacco a thing of the past.

FCA notes that, throughout the European Region, many countries are world leaders in tobacco control and continue to make great progress. For instance, in 2014 and 2015, some countries initiated laws to implement plain packaging of tobacco products and FCA would like to congratulate them for their leadership. However, we should not forget that, on average, the WHO European Region still has one of the highest proportions of deaths attributable to tobacco – 16 percent of all deaths in adults over 30 years of age¹.

We also note with concern that the tobacco industry continues to – directly or indirectly – impede, undermine or even reverse governments’ efforts to implement strong tobacco control measures. In this regard, we reiterate our wish to Member States to implement FCTC Art 5.3 and its guidelines by setting up a **government committee** or **agency**. Such an entity could be empowered to make recommendations, establish guidelines for governments’ meetings and other interactions with the tobacco industry deemed necessary – including a requirement that these interactions be made public – and develop a formal national policy. In the present context, this work seems paramount.

We are particularly pleased to note repeated references to tobacco taxes in the Roadmap. Indeed, even if this topic is not the main responsibility of ministries of health but of ministries of finance, price and tax measures on tobacco can be an effective and important means to reduce tobacco consumption and health-care costs.

Finally, FCA applauds Member States and WHO for fully aligning the Regional Roadmap on FCTC implementation with the post-2015 development agenda. As you are well aware, one of the targets under the sustainable development goal on health is dedicated to implementation of the Convention. At the same time, one of the guiding principles of the Roadmap is to leave no one behind.

Leaving no one behind is the key theme of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which will be adopted next week at the United Nations General Assembly. Neither the SDGs, nor the objectives of the Regional Roadmap will be achieved unless every country makes progress in FCTC implementation. We call on all countries in the European Region to pro-actively exchange best practices in tobacco control and to explicitly include FCTC implementation in their development assistance programmes. Tobacco will not become a thing of the past unless countries join efforts and help each other.

¹ WHO official facts and figures, see:

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/disease-prevention/tobacco/facts-and-figures>