

FCTC TRAVEL SUPPORT IS BEING REDUCED

Governments need to join forces to challenge this move

Decision 21 of the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) could have a significant impact on your government's participation in global tobacco control efforts.

The decision "harmonises travel support available to Parties of the WHO FCTC in line with current WHO administrative policies for travel support".

This sounds logical, but it could mean that your government will not be able to participate as before in FCTC meetings – sessions of the Conference of the Parties (COP) and Working Groups.

As a result of Decision 21 (officially FCTC/COP4 (21)), made at COP4 in 2010, participation of Pacific Island countries at future COP sessions will be negatively affected:

— Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Fiji, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Niue, Papua New Guinea and Tonga will receive only travel support to attend COP5 (no meals or lodging) and will receive no support at all to FCTC meetings **after** COP5;

— Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tuvalu and Vanuatu will receive full support to COP5 but will receive only travel support (no meals or lodging) **after** COP5.

FCTC TRAVEL SUPPORT HAS WORKED TO PROTECT GLOBAL PUBLIC HEALTH

- From 2000 to 2010, FCTC travel support was provided as a response to the low participation of Parties – developing countries identified lack of resources as the major obstacle to attending FCTC-related meetings.
- Decision 21 contradicts the recommendations of the previously adopted World Health Assembly resolution WHA 53.16, which recognises that the success of the FCTC depends on broad participation of WHO Member States.
- FCTC travel support from 2000 to 2010 yielded positive results. 81-96 per cent of the Parties that are currently eligible for FCTC travel support attended at least three out of four COP sessions.
- Low and lower-middle income Parties represent 46 per cent of all FCTC Parties, as of August 2012. These countries are increasingly targeted by the tobacco industry as it continues to expand its markets, and need the support provided by participating in FCTC meetings.
- The reduced ability of some Parties to participate in FCTC meetings may significantly affect COP negotiations. Without representation, low-resource Parties will be unable to express their views.



THE WAY FORWARD

Progress on tobacco control and implementation of the FCTC will be discussed at COP5 in Seoul. **FCTC travel support** will be reviewed in discussions on budgetary and institutional matters (COP5 agenda item 8.4).

COP5 represents a **last opportunity** to propose any changes to Decision 21.

Participation of Parties must remain high at FCTC COP sessions and other meetings.

PARTICIPATION OF THE PACIFIC ISLAND COUNTRIES

- Many Pacific Island countries that are eligible for travel support, including Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia (FSM), Marshall Islands, Niue, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, and Vanuatu attended all COP sessions.
- Most Pacific Island countries were repeatedly able to send only one delegate to attend COP sessions – their participation will be severely affected by Decision 21.

FCTC/COP4(21) Harmonization of travel support available to Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in line with current World Health Organization administrative policies for travel support

The Conference of the Parties,

Recalling World Health Assembly resolution WHA 50.1,

DECIDES to harmonize the travel support available to Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in line with current WHO administrative policies for travel support in favour of least developed countries;

DECIDES to finance the per diem of least developed countries on the same basis until and including the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties;

DECIDES to continue to finance travel for low- and lower-middle-income countries on the budget financed by voluntary assessed contributions, and to cover the costs of the corresponding per diem with resources available in the extrabudgetary funds until and including the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties;

REQUESTS the Convention Secretariat to prepare a full report on this issue taking into consideration the severe budgetary constraints for consideration by the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties.

What Can Be Done

Countries in the region should coordinate with their colleagues to develop a common position on FCTC travel support at COP5 – **speaking with one voice** on this issue.

1. Ahead of COP5, Parties can **contact colleagues** from other Pacific Island countries, and share their concerns regarding the impact of Decision 21. The matter may be also raised and discussed at various meetings prior to November 2012.
2. Parties from the Pacific Island countries can **develop and voice a common position on travel support** so that COP5 does not adopt measures that negatively affect the participation of low-resource Parties at future FCTC meetings. Instead, COP5 should adopt a decision that will reflect the concerns of all affected Parties.
3. Parties should **join COP5 discussions on the FCTC budget**, to ensure that sufficient attention is paid to the needs of low-resource Parties.