

REVIEW FCTC TRAVEL SUPPORT AT COP6

Governments need to join forces to negotiate new rules

Official travel support for governments should be reviewed again at the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP6) to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC).

Since 2010, travel support available to FCTC Parties has been officially harmonised with WHO administrative policies (decision FCTC/COP4(21)). As a result, many Parties are no longer eligible to receive support to participate at COP sessions, working groups and other official meetings.

At COP4 and COP5, many delegates raised concerns regarding the new measures. Consequently, an extension of some aspects of travel support for low- and lower-middle-income Parties was agreed until COP6. (This is why some Parties will still receive travel support to attend COP6 in Moscow.)

Unless COP6 takes a decision on this matter, the participation of 78 Parties at future COP sessions will be negatively affected. The affected Parties in the Eastern Mediterranean region are:

- Egypt, Pakistan and Syria which will receive no support at all to attend FCTC meetings **after** COP6;
- Afghanistan, Djibouti, Sudan and Yemen which will receive only travel support (no meals or lodging) **after** COP6.

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 (resolution WHA 53.16).
- The fourth and fifth sessions of the FCTC COP adopted decisions to reduce official support available to low-resource Parties to facilitate their participation at FCTC official meetings.
- FCTC travel support from 2000 to 2010 yielded positive results. In 2010, 88 percent of the Parties that are currently eligible for FCTC travel support attended COP4. In 2012, when the travel support was restricted, only 78 percent of low-resource Parties attended COP5.
- Low- and lower-middle-income countries represent 40 percent of all FCTC Parties, as of June 2014. 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 in order to counter industry interference.
- 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 COP6 in Moscow. A document related to **FCTC travel support** will be reviewed during the discussions on budget and institutional matters (COP6 agenda item 6.4).

COP6 **must review** the official travel support in order to assure that participation of low-resource Parties remains high at future FCTC COP sessions and other meetings. If not, the decision FCTC/COP4(21) will come into effect and 36 Parties will immediately lose all support to attend FCTC official meetings.

CLASSIFICATION OF COUNTRIES

- **Least Developed Countries (LDCs)**: the category was established in 1971 by the UN General Assembly and includes 48 countries¹. Eastern Mediterranean countries classified as LDCs are: Afghanistan, Djibouti, Sudan, Yemen.
- As of 1 July 2013, the World Bank² income classifications by gross national income per capita are:
 - **Low-income**: \$1,035 or less
 - **Lower-middle-income**: \$1,036 to \$4,085.

¹ see: <http://unohrlls.org/about-ldcs/>

² see: <http://data.worldbank.org/about/country-and-lending-groups>

COP5 decision on travel support

FCTC/COP5(18) *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;

Recalling its decision FCTC/COP4(21) taken at the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties;

Reaffirming the decision to harmonize the travel support available to Parties to the WHO FCTC in line with current WHO administrative policies for travel support in favour of least developed countries,

1. *DECIDES nevertheless to finance the per diem of least developed countries from voluntary assessed contributions on the same basis until and including the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties;*
2. *DECIDES moreover 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 sixth session of the Conference of the Parties;*
3. *RETAINS the right to review these decisions at the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties;*

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What Can Be Done

Countries in the region should coordinate their efforts to develop a common position on FCTC travel support at COP6 – **speak with one voice** on this issue.

1. Ahead of COP6, **contact colleagues** from other Eastern Mediterranean countries, and if possible from other regions, to share your concerns regarding the impact of decisions FCTC/COP4(21) and FCTC/COP5(18). The matter may also be raised and discussed at various meetings prior to October 2014.
2. **Introduce a common position on travel support** at COP6. The COP should review official travel support, but will likely do so only if Parties propose a specific decision on the matter.
3. **Join COP6 discussions on the FCTC budget**, to ensure that sufficient attention is paid to the needs of low-resource Parties.