

FCTC expert group on reporting and analysis of implementation

TRACKING THE FCTC'S PROGRESS

In October 2014, the world's governments took major steps to review progress in fighting the tobacco epidemic, regularly and systematically.

Meeting in the sixth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP6) to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the 180 Parties, which represent nearly 90 percent of the world's population, first endorsed a target to reduce tobacco use prevalence by 30 percent between 2010 and 2025¹. COP6 also agreed that progress on achieving the target will be discussed at every session of the COP, starting with COP7 in 2016².

Second, COP6 recognised that more needs to be done to assess the status of FCTC implementation – what progress has been achieved, where Parties lag behind and in which areas they need to focus.

As a result, an expert group was established to review and improve existing FCTC reporting arrangements, and to propose to COP7 a permanent mechanism to help Parties evaluate implementation progress³.

In order to accomplish its task, **the expert group** will need to:

- Clarify the expected outcomes of an implementation review process;
- Propose options for assessing FCTC implementation;
- Consider reporting arrangements in light of different approaches to reviewing implementation.

¹ COP decision FCTC/COP6(16)

² ibid

³ COP decision FCTC/COP6(15)

COP6 DECISION 15

COP6 established an expert group to review reporting arrangements under the WHO FCTC.

Among its tasks, the expert group was requested to:

- examine various reporting mechanisms of other international treaties, including those that utilize an intergovernmental peer review process, and
- **make recommendations** on strengthening the reporting arrangements and **on the development of a reporting and implementation review mechanism under the WHO FCTC.**

Well-functioning implementation review

Turning FCTC commitments into action is crucial to the success of the treaty in reducing tobacco use. Parties agreed that the development of an effective review process can provide critical information and support to ensure countries achieve the intended goals of the treaty.

Given the challenges that countries face in FCTC implementation, such as tobacco industry interference, unpredictable technical support or the lack of a budget, it is unlikely that an implementation review mechanism that merely highlights gaps in individual countries will improve this situation.

On the contrary, a mechanism that only highlights shortcomings and does not offer support or solutions could discourage – rather than encourage – countries from working on tobacco control.



TRACKING THE FCTC'S PROGRESS

If an FCTC implementation review is to succeed, it will need to serve at least two essential functions:

- Assess progress on implementing the Convention, and
- Facilitate information sharing, assistance and learning about effective implementation.

The mechanism should identify where implementation is strong, where it is lagging and what support would be most helpful, then report this information to Parties at COP sessions.

How to assess FCTC implementation globally

To assess implementation of the FCTC at the global level, agreement must be reached on a general approach, including which information will be used. There are at least two different ways to approach this. For example, a review could be conducted **article-by-article**, potentially starting with those articles for which an implementation deadline exists (Articles 8 and 11).

Another approach could be to assess **a representative sample** of Parties, ensuring geographic representation, different socio-economic levels and differences in trends of tobacco use prevalence (declining/growing/stable). These different methods of work would likely provide different insights and opportunities to formulate recommendations for improvements.

One of the key tasks of the expert group should be to consider various methods to collect and analyse information, their associated benefits or drawbacks, and the types of recommendations the different reviews might generate. Drawing lessons learned from other international conventions will be particularly important.

Since the expert group is scheduled to meet only once before COP7, research on how implementation

review mechanisms work under human rights or environmental treaties will need to take place before the group convenes.

Reporting arrangements and implementation review

The expert group was simultaneously tasked to review existing FCTC reporting arrangements, and propose improvements.

At present, Parties collect and compile extensive data on their tobacco control policies and tobacco consumption, and submit it to the Convention Secretariat every two years. The reporting instrument is comprised of a mandatory questionnaire of more than 200 questions, with an even longer optional module.

Filling out such a lengthy questionnaire can take a huge amount of officials' time and can be frustrating when the data are used only to develop a Global Progress Report. At COP6 it was suggested that the wording of the questionnaire is not always clear and that additional sources of information should be used to provide a full picture of implementation status and issues.

However, improving the FCTC's reporting arrangements, including the questionnaire, can be accomplished only after the expert group has considered how to best review FCTC implementation globally.

In order to deliver lasting solutions at COP7, the expert group will need to refrain from piecemeal approaches and instead focus on establishing a permanent system to strengthen implementation that will engage and encourage all Parties.



Well-functioning implementation review mechanism (IRM)

