



## Jamaica Coalition for Tobacco Control

28 Beechwood Avenue, P.O. Box 338, Kingston 5  
Tel: (876) 926-4378, 929-3195 • Fax: (876) 754-6441  
email: [jctc@heartfoundationja.org](mailto:jctc@heartfoundationja.org)

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

On this, World No Tobacco Day, the Jamaica Coalition for Tobacco Control is calling for an unequivocal and comprehensive ban of all forms of tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship to help reduce the prevalence of tobacco use in Jamaica. The Coalition makes this call given that tobacco is a deadly drug as evidenced by the following:

**6 million people are killed by tobacco each year**

**600,000 people die each year from exposure to second-hand smoke.**

**63% of all deaths are caused by NCDs, with tobacco as the greatest risk factor<sup>1</sup>**

Predictions by authorities state that the developing world will bear an increasing share of this burden of smoking tobacco.

As a coalition of health professionals in Jamaica, the scourge of the tobacco epidemic is particularly real and frustrating to our members. Painfully real because in spite of our best efforts, every six seconds someone dies due to tobacco. Frustrating because those illnesses were entirely preventable. The evidence is clear if the provisions of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) are enacted its negative impact would be significantly reduced.

Contrary to the assertion of commercial interests, that marketing efforts are only directed at adults, results from the Global Youth Tobacco Survey (2010) indicated that among students in Grades 7,8,9,10 in Jamaica:

- 59.8% saw pro-cigarette ads on billboards, in the past 30 days
- 54% saw pro-cigarette ads in newspapers or magazines, in the past 30 days

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<sup>1</sup> World Health Organization

#### Member Organizations:

Association of General Practitioners of Jamaica • Caribbean College of Family Physicians, Jamaica Chapter  
Caribbean Public Health Association • Diabetes Association of Jamaica • Jamaica Cancer Society • Jamaica Dental Association  
Nurses Association of Jamaica • The Heart Foundation of Jamaica • The Medical Association of Jamaica

- 14.7% have an object with a cigarette brand logo
- 9.8% were offered free cigarettes by a tobacco company representative
- 8 out of 10 students were not refused purchase because of age<sup>2</sup>

It is regrettably no surprise, therefore, that tobacco use has been increasing among Jamaican children:

- 31.3% currently use any tobacco product (Male 32.5%, Female 28%)
- 20.2% currently smoke cigarettes (Male = 22.5%, Female 17.7%)

The Coalition believes that as a society, every conceivable measure must be taken to shield our children from being snared into tobacco addiction. Their protection must be our country's fixed purpose, as there is no balance between their health and future and the greed of a few.

The Coalition's position is evidence based. In 2009 a comprehensive review of tobacco-related research was released by The National Cancer Institute (US). The monograph was compiled by 23 authors, 63 expert reviewers and took five years to produce. The two main scientific conclusions were:

1. There is a causal relationship between tobacco advertising and promotion and increased tobacco use.
2. Comprehensive bans reduce tobacco consumption. However, partial bans only lead to greater expenditure in 'non-banned' areas, resulting in no net reduction of tobacco use.<sup>3</sup>

Therefore, Jamaica must seek to adopt the best practices of the 19 countries which have already made strides in protecting their youth, by promulgating the most complete measures possible in accordance with Article 13 of the FCTC.

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<sup>2</sup> Global Youth Tobacco Survey, Jamaica 2010 - National Council on Drug Abuse

<sup>3</sup> Framework Convention Alliance

The Coalition encourages the government to see the FCTC as merely the floor, and not a ceiling of mediocrity. Therefore, in keeping with Article 2 of the convention, the Coalition urges

“in order to better protect human health, [the government of Jamaica] to implement measures beyond those required by this Convention and its protocols.”<sup>4</sup>

The Coalition notes that in addition to the government’s moral duty, as a party to the treaty since July 7, 2005, Jamaica has “a fundamental legal obligation to interpret and implement the Convention in good faith”<sup>5</sup> in accordance with the Vienna Convention.

Finally, the Coalition, firmly supports the call of Dr. Margaret Chan, Director General of the World Health Organization for governments, including Jamaica's, to *“make it their top priority to stop the tobacco industry’s shameless manipulation of young people and women, in particular, to recruit the next generation of nicotine addicts.”*



Knox Hagley  
Chairman

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<sup>4</sup> Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

<sup>5</sup> A Guide to Domestic Implementation of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) - Framework Convention Alliance, January 2006