

## The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

### Global response to a globalised epidemic

*“The WHO FCTC was developed in response to the globalisation of the tobacco epidemic . . . (which) is facilitated through a variety of complex factors . . . including trade liberalisation and direct foreign investment. Other factors, such as global marketing, transnational tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, and the international movement of contraband and counterfeit cigarettes, have also contributed to the explosive increase in tobacco use.” – Foreword to the FCTC*

The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) is the world’s first global public health treaty, adopted unanimously by the World Health Assembly in May 2003. By 20 August 2010, there were 171 Parties to the FCTC – the latest being Afghanistan and Côte d’Ivoire – which represented 87.3% of the world’s population.

Parties to the FCTC have a legally binding obligation under international law to enact and implement laws, policies and programmes to reduce the demand for tobacco products and protect their citizens from exposure to tobacco smoke, on the one hand, and to control the supply of tobacco products, on the other. What makes such a binding global instrument possible is the irrefutable scientific evidence that tobacco causes a range of serious health problems and is responsible each year for millions of deaths, mainly from cancer, cardio-vascular and respiratory disease.

The FCTC was developed in response to the globalisation of the tobacco epidemic, following in the wake of transnational tobacco advertising, marketing and sales driven by powerful multinational corporations. The treaty is based on the premise that the only meaningful public health response is one that is well coordinated, and that rests on global implementation of effective tobacco control laws, policies and programmes.

#### **Reducing consumption and exposure**

Much of the FCTC is devoted to measures that governments are required to take in order to reduce tobacco demand and to protect entire populations from exposure to tobacco smoke. In particular, Parties are required to:

- Introduce pricing and tax measures that are likely to deter people from buying tobacco products.
- Protect their population from exposure to tobacco smoke.
- Require manufacturers to print health warnings on tobacco product packaging and prohibit the use of misleading information.
- Develop programmes to inform and educate the public on the risks of tobacco use.
- Strictly control tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship.
- Develop programmes to address tobacco dependence and assist tobacco users to break their addiction.



### **Controlling the supply side**

Other provisions of the FCTC relate to measures to restrict the supply of tobacco products. These include:

- Combating the illicit trade in tobacco products.
- Banning the sale of tobacco to minors.
- Providing support for economically sustainable alternatives to tobacco cultivation.

The FCTC came into effect in February 2005, following ratification by 40 countries. Countries continue to join as Parties to the Convention, the most recent being Afghanistan and Côte d'Ivoire, which both ratified the FCTC on 13 August 2010.

The Parties to the FCTC have organised three conferences to develop instruments to strengthen the treaty and review their record in implementing it. They met in Geneva in 2006, in Bangkok in 2007 and in South Africa in November 2008. The next Conference of the Parties (COP) will be in November 2010, in Uruguay.

### **The FCTC and civil society**

From the outset, the Framework Convention Alliance (FCA) has engaged with the official process of developing and ratifying the treaty, and it continues to be actively involved in advocating for effective implementation.

The FCA is a network of nearly 400 non-governmental organisations from more than 100 countries that promotes and supports tobacco control through the development and implementation of the FCTC, its protocols and guidelines. This includes:

- Strengthening and influencing the FCTC process;
- Mobilising and strengthening the capacity of regional and local civil society in support of the FCTC;
- Monitoring the implementation of the FCTC, its guidelines and protocols, and;
- Monitoring the activities of the tobacco industry.

### **Strengthening the FCTC**

At the first three COPs, Parties took strong action to advance implementation of the treaty, including by adopting implementation guidelines for four FCTC articles, and deciding to negotiate a protocol on illicit trade in tobacco products.

In the foreword to the FCTC the then Director General of the World Health Organization, Dr Jong-wook Lee, remarked: "The success of the FCTC as a tool for public health will depend on the energy and political commitment that we devote to implementing it in countries in the coming years."

The FCA believes that this emphasis on political commitment remains valid as the Parties prepare to gather for their fourth conference. We look to this conference to provide clear and uncompromising action in pursuit of the goals of the FCTC.