



This document relates to item 8.4 of the provisional agenda.

Fifth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the
WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, 12-17 November 2012, Seoul, South Korea

FCA Policy Briefing: **Travel Support**

Key recommendations:

- The Framework Convention Alliance recommends that the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties establish an FCTC-specific travel support policy;
- The FCTC-specific travel support policy should provide full support (most direct, roundtrip, economy class ticket; lodging; and per diem) to all FCTC-related events for one delegate from each low- and lower-middle-income Party, including least developed countries;
- Resources to facilitate travel for all eligible Parties should come from FCTC's core funding – Voluntary Assessed Contributions.

Background

The participation and informed discussion at FCTC-related meetings of all FCTC Parties are essential for the work of the Convention and for making progress on tobacco control. The travel support available for FCTC-related meetings from 2000 until the fourth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP4) was put in place as a response to objective realities on the ground and worked well to protect global public health.

The participation of countries in the early stages of negotiations of the WHO FCTC was critically low when standard travel support rules of the World Health Organization (WHO) were applied. Only 114 WHO Member States attended the first meeting in Geneva¹. Subsequently, travel support for FCTC-related meetings was expanded in 2000 to cover all low- and lower-middle-income countries. The support included an air ticket, lodging and per diem for one delegate per country; this remained unchanged through COP4 in 2010.

At COP4 a decision to significantly reduce travel support for FCTC-related meetings was adopted². At the same time, temporary measures were put in place to reduce the negative impacts of this decision³ and it was decided that the matter would be reviewed in 2012. Unless a new decision on FCTC travel support is adopted at the fifth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP5), the participation of more than 80 Parties at FCTC-related meetings may be threatened.

FCA urges all Parties to join COP5 discussions on this matter and ensure that COP5 adopts a distinct FCTC travel support policy, which would include providing air ticket, lodging and per diem, in order to facilitate the participation of all low- and lower-middle-income countries.

¹ Document A53/12 para 2 http://apps.who.int/gb/archive/pdf_files/WHA53/ea12.pdf.

² COP4 decision FCTC/COP4(21).

³ *Ibid.*

COP4: discussions and decision

The discussions which took place at COP4 concerning travel support were inconclusive, and the resulting decision demonstrates lack of consensus on the topic. When a draft decision on the matter was circulated as part of the COP4 budget discussion, many low-resource countries were not present in the room since most had only a one-person delegation at the COP and could not attend simultaneous Committee A and Committee B meetings. However, when some of these Parties became aware of the Committee B discussions, many of them provided their views and concerns regarding the draft decision⁴.

After several hours of intense negotiations, COP4 decided to harmonize FCTC travel support with WHO practice, but agreed to introduce exceptions up to and including COP5⁵. The decision also includes a provision that reduced support may be still provided if extrabudgetary resources become available. Nevertheless, the implications of this measure were immediate, and more than 40 Parties lost partial support to attend FCTC-related meetings.

Impacts of the COP4 decision

Decision FCTC/COP4(21) affects Parties that are in the greatest need of international support for tobacco control. Some countries have already been negatively affected by the decision, while many more will feel its consequences after COP5:

- Travel support for Parties classified as low- and lower-middle-income⁶ was reduced to include only the air ticket, up to and including COP5. No support for meals and lodging was provided to facilitate participation of these Parties at any meetings during 2011 and 2012. All support for these Parties is expected to be withdrawn after COP5;
- For Least Developed Countries (LDCs)⁷, there were no changes until after COP5. The support for meals and hotel will be cut after November 2012.

The Overview in report FCTC/COP/5/22 clearly shows that many of the affected countries have repeatedly been able to send only one delegate to key FCTC meetings⁸. With the COP4 decision resulting in no travel support, or only limited support, these Parties may no longer be able to attend global meetings and engage in discussions on tobacco control that affect their countries.

Already at the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body on a Protocol on Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products (INB5) the results of diminished travel support were obvious. For instance, only 5 of 11 low- and lower-middle-income Parties (excluding LDCs) from the Western Pacific region managed to attend the INB5 meeting in March 2012⁹. Participation of these Parties dropped by more than 40 percent compared with attendance at INB4 in 2010¹⁰. Participation of Parties from the African region also dropped between INB4 and INB5.

⁴ See the summary records of the proceedings of Committee B at COP4 (fourth meeting) in document FCTC/COP/4/REC/3 (p.95-99): http://apps.who.int/gb/fctc/PDF/cop4/FCTC_COP4_REC3-en.pdf.

⁵ Decision FCTC/COP4(21).

⁶ World Bank classification.

⁷ United Nations classification.

⁸ FCTC/COP/5/22, paragraph 8.

⁹ Document FCTC/COP/INB-IT/5/DIV/1 Rev. 1.

¹⁰ Document FCTC/COP/INB-IT/4/DIV/1 Rev.2.

Concerns regarding travel support were repeatedly discussed at Bureau meetings^{11 12}, and the issue was raised during regional discussions. Yet no information is provided in the official COP5 reports¹³ on fundraising activities or provision of extrabudgetary resources in 2011 or 2012 to facilitate participation at FCTC-related events.

COP5 must establish an FCTC-specific policy for all Parties that need travel support

Travel support for low-resource Parties to attend meetings of the FCTC will be discussed in Committee B of COP5 (agenda item 8.4)¹⁴. All affected countries – 46 percent of all FCTC Parties – should join these discussions and voice their views on the matter.

FCA believes that Parties should be represented when decisions are made that affect them. Participation of delegates from low-resource countries at FCTC-related events is essential to curb the tobacco epidemic. These countries are increasingly targeted by the tobacco industry as it continues to expand its markets. At a minimum, obligations of international cooperation should be expected to ensure this representation.

When travel support for FCTC-related meetings was introduced in 2000, it was recognized that work on global tobacco control requires special attention and support¹⁵. Although progress has been achieved in past years to promote the profile of the Convention, support for tobacco control in many low-resource countries remains insufficient.

There is little valid justification for the FCTC COP to align its travel support policies with the practices of the United Nations system. Obvious differences exist between World Health Assembly (WHA) and WHO regional committee meetings – where numerous health topics are reviewed – and the FCTC-related events, which focus on matters related solely to the Convention. In 2012, more than 100 Ministers of Health attended the WHA¹⁶. In contrast, fewer than 45 Ministers of Health attended the past four COP sessions combined¹⁷. Securing domestic resources to facilitate attendance of delegates at prominent events, such as the WHA, is certainly easier than providing support for travel for technical staff working on tobacco control.

FCA recommends that COP5 establish a distinct FCTC travel support policy. FCTC's travel support should cover a roundtrip, economy class ticket, lodging and per diem to all FCTC-related events for one delegate from each low- and lower-middle-income Party, including LDCs. Resources to facilitate travel for all eligible Parties should come from FCTC's core funding – Voluntary Assessed Contributions (VACs), not from extrabudgetary sources.

¹¹ Minutes of the second meeting of the fourth Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO FCTC, paragraph 13.

¹² Draft minutes of the third meeting of the fourth Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO FCTC, paragraph 51.

¹³ FCTC/COP/5/20 or FCTC/COP/5/22.

¹⁴ FCTC/COP/5/1 (annotated).

¹⁵ Decision WHA 53.16 explicitly mentions the need for greater participation of low-resource countries in the FCTC process.

¹⁶ Document A65/DIV/1 Rev.1 – Official list of delegates and other participants.

¹⁷ Document A/FCTC/COP/1/DIV/2 Rev.1; A/FCTC/COP/2/DIV/4 Rev.1; FCTC/COP/3/DIV/2 Rev.2; FCTC/COP/4/DIV/1 Rev.1.