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## **SEA Tobacco Control Alliance urges Indonesia to fast track progress in tobacco control**

**23 April 2012-Bangkok:** The Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance (SEATCA) on 23 April 2012 welcomed the progress on the passage of its long-awaited government regulations on tobacco control (PP).

This PP, the implementing rules for Law No. 36/2009, has already been delayed for more than two years in the long drawn process of drafting and approval. It should be expedited now and passed speedily to avoid further delays. With every delay, it is the Indonesian public, especially children, who are denied protection from hazards of tobacco use.

“It is not a stringent regulation in comparison to the region, but it is certainly moving in the right direction,” SEATCA said in a statement.

“We particularly welcome the announcement on pictorial health warnings (PHW) which will cover 40 percent of a cigarette pack including text, even though this still is not at par with Indonesia’s neighbors in ASEAN,” the regional tobacco control network added. Ironically, Indonesia exports cigarette packs to Brunei and Singapore (with PHW’s at 50 percent front/50 percent back) and Malaysia (with PHW’s at 40 percent front and 60 percent back), all of which countries mandate a more prominent pictorial health warnings relative to pack size.

“While we welcome this positive development, Indonesia needs to fast-track its tobacco control movement to be at par with the rest of its neighbors in the ASEAN region,” says SEATCA Director Bungon Ritthiphakdee. Currently, Indonesia is lagging far behind the rest of ASEAN, and remains the only country without bans on tobacco advertising promotion and sponsorships. This leaves a black mark on tobacco control as it is the most basic step in tobacco control a country would take. The PP will allow smaller sized cigarette billboards. “In essence, Indonesia will still remain a paradise for cigarette companies to continue advertising,” Ritthiphakdee adds.

“We also have to continue working hard to achieve 100 percent smoke-free places. And while the PP regulation provides authorities to assign designated smoking rooms, studies have shown this does not work, and authorities will have difficulty in terms of enforcement,” adds Ms. Rithiphakdee. The PP regulation should be more in line with the more comprehensive DKI Jakarta Governor regulation number 75/2005 and 88/2010. Jakarta City has gone 100 percent smoke-free last year.

Indonesia has one of the worst tobacco consumption profiles in the region. The country has 57 million smokers, and 200,000 smoking-related deaths annually. The country has high and steadily increasing numbers of tobacco consumption for both men and women. In 1995, an estimated 70,000 children aged 10-14 years were smoking. In 2010 the number has increased to 426,000 child-smokers. This means that within 12 years the number of child smokers increased six fold. (ENDS).