

STATEMENT OF FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ALLIANCE

SIXTY-FOURTH SESSION OF THE WHO REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR EUROPE

Framework Convention Alliance (FCA) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to discussions at the Sixty-fourth Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe, particularly on agenda item 5 (b) (iii): **WHO European Ministerial Conference on the Prevention and Control of Noncommunicable Diseases in the Context of Health**.

Noting that the WHO European Region has one of the highest proportions of deaths attributable to tobacco – 16 percent of all deaths in adults over 30 years of age¹, FCA congratulates WHO Member States in the European Region for their determination to tackle noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) by adopting the Ashgabat Declaration in December 2013. The Ashgabat Declaration specifies that the Members of the WHO European Region share the ambition of moving beyond a focus on tobacco control towards a **tobacco-free region**. We applaud the fact that some governments have already taken steps towards this goal. We would like to also take this opportunity to once again congratulate the European Union and its member states for the remarkable progress they made on tobacco control by adopting the EU Tobacco Products Directive.

FCA wishes to reiterate its full support for the efforts of Member States and WHO to strengthen the **WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)** and its implementation. We fully support the **draft resolution (Conf. Doc. 6)** on NCDs. We note with concern, however, that the tobacco industry continues to – directly or indirectly – slow down, undermine or even revert governments' efforts to implement strong tobacco control measures. The EU is facing litigation against the Tobacco Products Directive and the Irish and UK governments, which have announced plans to introduce standardised packaging of tobacco, are facing intensive lobbying from the tobacco industry.

In this regard, we urge Member States to implement FCTC Art 5.3 and its guidelines by setting up a **government committee or agency**. Such an entity could be empowered to make recommendations, establish guidelines for meetings and other interactions with the tobacco industry deemed necessary – including a requirement that these interactions be made public – and develop a formal national policy including an enforcement mechanism for public agencies' engagement with the tobacco industry, conduct of officials in dealings with the industry, and management of conflicts of interest. In the present context, this work seems paramount.

We also support the request to the General Director, which includes the following elements: develop a **European action plan for achieving the global target on noncommunicable diseases related to tobacco use** in the European Region; and **strengthen technical support to Member States** in attaining all global targets and in assessing health systems for challenges and opportunities in the prevention and control of NCDs, in partnership with all relevant stakeholders, in pursuit of the aims and promote the values of the Ashgabat Declaration.

Finally, FCA would like to draw the attention of Member States to the **sixth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP)** to the WHO FCTC, which will take place later this year (13-18 October, 2014). In particular, draft **guidelines for implementation of price and tax measures to reduce the demand for tobacco** will be considered for adoption by the COP. The COP is also expected to review sustainable measures to strengthen implementation of the Convention and consider several tools that should support Parties in **mobilising additional resources** and generating **increased political will** for tobacco control.

¹ WHO official facts and figures, see:

<http://www.euro.who.int/en/what-we-do/health-topics/disease-prevention/tobacco/facts-and-figures>