Heated Tobacco Products

Key Recommendations

- Heated tobacco products (HTP) meet the definition of tobacco products under the FCTC. No decision by the COP is required to ensure the relevant articles apply and Parties are urged to ensure that HTPs, including heating devices, are properly covered in their legal regimes.
- In view of the relatively recent development of several HTP products and the rapid growth in marketing and sales in some countries, Parties may wish to mandate the Secretariat to request a report from WHO on relevant scientific, regulatory and marketing information.

Background

HTPs work by heating tobacco at a lower temperature than conventional cigarettes to produce an aerosol that contains nicotine and other chemicals that is inhaled by the user. HTPs should not be confused with electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), which are a separate and distinct category of products that do not use leaf tobacco.

HTPs are composed of two elements – the sticks or pods that contain the tobacco and the device used to heat the tobacco. For each product, these two elements are indivisible such that one cannot be used without the other. With the two most prominent products on the market – IQOS/HEETS and Glo/Neosticks – the device and the tobacco sticks are branded and marketed separately by PMI and BAT, respectively.

There have been few independent studies on the health effects of HTPs. Manufacturers have commissioned studies and claim that HTPs are substantially less hazardous than cigarettes. However, the short, medium, and long term health effects of using HTPs remain largely unknown. The WHO highlights that “currently, there is no evidence to demonstrate that HTPs are less harmful than conventional tobacco products.”

HTPs have existed for several decades, but it is only since the launch of PMI’s IQOS product in 2014 that they have achieved any significant market share anywhere. For the time being, Japan and South

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1 WHO Heated tobacco products (HTPs) information sheet
Korea are the biggest markets for HTPs, with lower sales in other high-income countries and a small number of middle-income countries (e.g. Guatemala, South Africa, Ukraine and Kazakhstan).

Tobacco companies are heavily marketing HTPs in many of the countries where the products are available and also on unrestricted media such as social media platforms that have global reach. In several countries there have been formal complaints that tobacco company advertising and promotion of HTP is in breach of existing laws.\(^2\) Also, HTPs can harvest data about their use, which can lead to privacy issues.

**Application of the FCTC to HTPs**

There is no doubt that HTPs are tobacco products and, therefore, the full range of policy and regulatory measures contained in the WHO FCTC apply.

One of the WHO FCTC’s guiding principles contained in Article 4.2(b) highlights “the need to take measures to prevent the initiation, to promote and support cessation, and to decrease the consumption of tobacco products in any form” (emphasis added). This is consistent with the WHO’s recommendation.\(^3\)

Because HTPs are tobacco products, public health policies concerning HTPs should be developed free from tobacco industry interference, in accordance with WHO FCTC Article 5.3 and its implementing guidelines.

However, because the sticks/pods that contain the tobacco and the device used to heat the tobacco are often branded and marketed separately, it is important for Parties to ensure that their existing tobacco control measures cover both elements.

\(^2\) Lithuania, UK and Colombia.

\(^3\) WHO Heated tobacco products (HTPs) information sheet http://www.who.int/tobacco/publications/prod_regulation/heated-tobacco-products/en/