CELEBRATE OUR VICTORIES – BUT THE WORK IS ONLY PARTLY DONE

Many delegates likely left Committee A yesterday feeling a mixture of relief and frustration. Despite the obvious and shocking delaying tactics of a few delegates, the Committee took a gigantic step forward for FCTC implementation by endorsing the first ever Global Strategy for Tobacco Control.

That's a big deal: identifying priorities from now until 2025, with a clear and ambitious objective of reducing prevalence sharply, will help the COP, the Secretariat and individual Parties organise their work and raise funds.

Parties should take a moment to celebrate this important achievement, but should remember that this week's work is not yet finished. Adopting the Strategy was a first step, but only a first step.

As we head into budget and workplan discussions, it’s critical to prioritise activities and funding to reflect our newly agreed Global Strategy – activities that will actually help to close the gap between where we currently stand and the desired future – a world free from tobacco-caused death and disease.

And lest anyone forget: the Global Strategy will go nowhere if we do not make significant progress on closing the global resource gap. That requires a collective effort by Parties to put money where their mouth is.
A LESSON FROM SEARO: PICTORIAL HEALTH WARNINGS

Nearly 360 million people use smokeless tobacco (SLT) in 140 countries and more than 650,000 people globally die every year from using it. Pictorial health warnings (PHWs) are one of the most cost-effective tobacco control measures that Parties should implement on all tobacco products, including smokeless tobacco.

As per the 2018 Global Progress Report on Implementation of the WHO FCTC, 88 per cent of the Parties to the Treaty have implemented health warnings on tobacco products, while 64 per cent require pictorial health warnings. Timor-Leste is the frontrunner in implementing PHWs on all tobacco products covering 92.5 per cent on both sides of the packages, while Nepal requires 90 per cent on both sides. However, the implementation of the same provision for smokeless tobacco products is lagging.

Recent analysis of the implementation of the Article 11 provisions on SLT reveals that only half of the Parties (51 per cent) implemented pictorial health warnings on smokeless tobacco, whilst over three-quarters (77 per cent) of the Parties had implemented them on cigarettes in 2017. A higher proportion of low-resource Parties (55 per cent) had implemented PHWs on smokeless tobacco compared to high-resource Parties (48 per cent) during the same period. Overall, SEARO recorded best compliance in accordance with provisions of Article 11 for smokeless tobacco. Among 36 high SLT burden Parties (i.e. Parties having male/female SLT use prevalence of ≥10% and/or >1 million SLT users) India, Nepal, Philippines, Egypt, Kenya, Uruguay and Kyrgyzstan have complete policy and implementation of Article 11 on SLT products.

According to the report released by the WHO Knowledge Hub on Smokeless Tobacco, globally, only 16 per cent of Parties have comprehensive Article 11 policies for SLT products. The findings emphasise the need for swift action. Parties need to implement large warnings with pictorial representations and multiple messages about various diseases for all tobacco products including smokeless.

ENDS: FOR NOW AN INCONCLUSIVE DEBATE

Regulatory approaches to ENDS (otherwise known as e-cigarettes or vapes) remain one of the most heated debates within tobacco control.

There is disagreement on the evidence concerning ENDS, including their absolute and relative risk to human health, as well as their impact on broader public health. Hence, views on best practices for regulating ENDS vary widely. Regulatory positions range from complete bans on the sale of ENDS, to treating them favourably as a tool for cessation.

It has now been a decade since ENDS was first discussed at COP3 and the debate around how Parties and the FCTC should address ENDS shows no signs of stopping. Indeed, it seems this debate could rage on indefinitely among well-intentioned Parties, but with the only outcome being valuable COP time lost seeking an unachievable consensus.

Given limitations on time, and the other important work that is needed to strengthen implementation of the FCTC. Given that Parties — along with researchers, civil society, and policy makers — have staunchly held but divergent views, we recommend that Parties should refrain from engaging in lengthy and inconclusive discussion.
Unlocking the power of tobacco taxes to finance health priorities is an opportunity governments cannot afford to ignore. The economic evidence underpinning the rationale for raising tobacco taxes is backed by economic experts and world leaders. Tobacco taxes can also be a strong mechanism for funding health and sustainable development.

When governments can see beyond the interference of the disruptive tobacco industry, the multiple benefits of tax increases, can be a game changer for financing FCTC priorities – such as those set out in the Global Strategy, adopted by the Parties yesterday. Preventable disease and death rates decline and cash-strapped Parties can progress towards reaching health and sustainable development goals. Parties have everything to gain and little to lose if they rely on the economic evidence to implement regular tobacco tax increases not least protecting populations, the environment, increasing overall productivity and societal wellbeing.

Anne Jones
The Union
NOW THAT THE GLOBAL STRATEGY IS AGREED, LET’S RESOURCE IT PROPERLY

The implementation of the Global Strategy to Accelerate Tobacco Control will have multiple benefits – both for Parties who are struggling to prioritise and resource tobacco control efforts, and also for the Convention Secretariat. For the latter, the Global Strategy should provide a strong focus for their workplan, and the budget should be aligned to ensure that activities in the workplan are fully resourced. The Convention Secretariat is a small team and their human and financial resources are already under pressure.

The draft version of the proposed workplan and budget for the 2020-2021 biennium (document FCTC/COP/8/16) was not developed with the Global Strategy in mind. With limited funds available, Parties will also need to decide what should happen to activities included in the proposed workplan and budget that are not identified as priorities in the Strategy. If these two documents are not aligned, it will divert time and resources away from achieving the targets outlined in the Global Strategy.

The Global Strategy sets high-level priorities for work, but the existence of the document alone will not create change. Achieving the goals and targets in the Strategy will require that Parties, civil society, and other relevant stakeholders take action in line with the Strategy. For Parties, this will require that they develop, update, and implement their own costed, multisectoral national tobacco control plans and strategies to reflect the priority areas of work identified in the Global Strategy, responsive to their national circumstances. Support should be made available for Objective 1.2 of the Strategy which notes that “the Convention Secretariat will provide Parties with targeted assistance to develop and implement costed national plans for tobacco control”.

The pilot Implementation Review Mechanism also needs resources, albeit modest. Parties should ensure that the pilot project is funded for the two-year period specified in the Global Strategy. The US$100,000 cost of this project is eminently sensible, and funding should be allocated in both 2019 and 2020 such that this project can begin right after COP.

The workplan and budget is only part of the picture. A concerted effort is also required to raise substantial additional funds to support Parties’ efforts to tackle the tobacco epidemic at the national level, as well as to bolster the Secretariat’s funding to deliver on commitments. The proposed investment fund should play a part in this but there is an urgent need for a wider fundraising strategy.

Ryan Forrest, Framework Convention Alliance

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COP NEEDS TO LET MOP GROW UP, AND MOP NEEDS TO DEAL WITH IT!

Every parent knows this feeling. You are incredibly proud of seeing your little one grow and you dread the moment when they do not need your help anymore, or worse, do not want your help anymore. COP has come to this point.

As of last week, the ITP is in force and that has real consequences. COP and MOP will continue to share a house and a Secretariat (you cannot kick out your kids just because they come of age), but MOP will need to stand on its own feet.

COP can support MOP until MOP begins to receive its own Assessed Contributions that are yet to be negotiated at MOP1. Once Parties to the ITP start to contribute, MOP will have to spread its wings. It will need its own budget and its own staff in order to be functional. Both are treaties in their own right. Anything but a clear separation between the two, has the potential to cause confusion, distractions or even confusion about accountability.

The tasks of MOP go further than global health policy. MOP needs to occupy itself with international law enforcement, customs and tax administration in order to combat effectively the global trade in illicit tobacco products.

These provisions will not come with a low price tag as Parties to the ITP will learn next week. It is entirely understandable that Parties which contribute money to the ITP want to make any spending decisions in this regard by themselves.

None of this changes the fact that we will forever love our kids. But at some point we need to let them go.

Mischa Terzyk, Framework Convention Alliance
BULGARIA AND CROSS-BORDER ADVERTISING OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS

In 2004, Bulgaria passed a law banning cross-border sponsorship and advertising of tobacco products (Law on Tobacco and Related Products, art. 35 (5) 2), in line with EU Directive 2003/33 /EC.

In Bulgaria, this ban is controlled by the Consumer Protection Commission, under the Ministry of Economics.

According the Commission's annual reports, there have been no breaches of sponsorship and cross-border tobacco advertising for the past 3 years. There are no cases of incoming cross-border advertising from the 5 neighboring countries, 2 of which are EU members, and the others are candidates for membership.

While the Smoke-free Life Coalition agrees that there have been no violations at sports and musical events either in Bulgaria or in neighboring countries, the Coalition is deeply concerned by advertising on the internet, which could be considered as a new form of cross-border advertising (also see yesterday's bulletin article on "Article 13 in the Digital Age.")

There are many cases of advertising on Youtube by internationally famous Bulgarian artists, such pop stars “Nicole”, “Krisko” and Polly Genova. Genova won second place in the 2016 Eurovision Song Contest and has thousands of fans globally. They are known for performing with specific brands of cigarettes in their hands. The distribution of these videos via the Internet makes them accessible to the world and allows for unrestricted cross-border advertising of tobacco products.

For the last three years, the Smoke-Free Life Coalition has been struggling to change legislation and to introduce a complete ban on Tobacco Advertising, Promotion and Sponsorship (TAPS) across the country. Bulgaria is one of the few countries in Europe where TAPS is still allowed.

We welcome your support to endorse our proposal in front of Bulgarian Parliament.

Dr Gergana Geshanova
Smoke-Free Life Coalition, Bulgaria

L’APPROCHE GENRE DANS LA LUTTE ANTITABAC EN AFRIQUE

Il n’est plus à démontrer que les femmes occupent une place importante dans la société moderne. C’est à juste titre que les Nations Unies considèrent la prise en compte des femmes dans les questions de développement comme un tremplin pour la réalisation des Objectifs du Développement Durable (ODD).

Selon l’Organisation mondiale pour la Santé (OMS), sur le milliard de fumeurs dans le monde, près de 200 millions sont des femmes dont 13 million sur le continent africain, et 13% des jeunes filles adolescentes du continent utilisant des produits du tabac. Ces chiffres sont alarmants, et il est évident que si des mesures appropriées ne sont pas prises, ils s’accroîtront de manière exponentielle dans les années à venir, car les compagnies du tabac ciblent les femmes de façon agressive pour élargir leur base de consommateurs. En effet, il est aujourd’hui fréquent de voir dans plusieurs pays d’Afrique des produits du tabac ciblant les femmes tels que les cigarettes SLIM aromatisés ou non, et plusieurs produits du tabac non fumée.

Mieux comprendre l’épidémie de tabagisme, son impact sur les femmes et la combattre, est un élément important à considérer dans toute stratégie de lutte antitabac aussi bien nationale que globale. Le tabagisme féminin génère des conséquences considérables aussi bien pour la santé maternelle et infantile, que pour le bien-être du ménage. L’hypothèse selon laquelle le tabagisme maternel pendant la grossesse est associé à des problèmes de comportement chez les enfants est soutenue par un nombre croissant d’études. Dans les communautés africaines, les femmes sont le plus souvent en charge de l’éducation des enfants, l’entretien du foyer ou encore la gestion de la nourriture. Il est évident que leur prise en compte dans les politiques de lutte antitabac contribuerait à accélérer l’amélioration de la santé de plusieurs couches de la société mais aussi aurait un impact sans précédent pouvant conduire à un développement durable tant souhaité.

Au vu de ce qui précède, les Parties devraient s’efforcer à intégrer le genre dans tous les aspects de la stratégie mondiale de lutte antitabac, un outil important d’accélération de la mise en œuvre de la convention.

Haja Ramamonjisoa, NY SAHY, Madagascar
Leonce Sessou, African Tobacco Control Alliance (ATCA)
IN PURSUIT OF VIABLE ALTERNATIVE LIVELIHOODS FOR TOBACCO FARMERS AND FARM WORKERS

The hundreds of thousands of small-holder tobacco farmers and farm workers around the globe face many livelihood challenges, including poor economic returns, sickness from handling tobacco leaf and environmental destruction of their land. But switching to other livelihoods can be challenging because many farmers and workers are trapped in poverty due to unfair labour /credit contracts and low leaf prices. They may also face poor access to loans, lack agrarian education, and/or perceive a lack of viable economic alternatives.

Involving tobacco farmers as agents in their own transitions to better livelihoods has proven to be challenging. On the one hand, the tobacco industry frequently co-opts their voices through the International Tobacco Growers Association and other lobbying organisations to promote the industry’s goals. On the other, their limited role frustrates many farmers and can pose a challenge to Article 17 implementation as their legitimate needs are poorly identified and addressed. Often, their limited role stems from their struggles to meet basic needs. We must improve opportunities for farmers to play key roles in Article 17 projects — with safeguards against tobacco industry interference and compliance with Article 5.3.

Evidence points to multiple pathways to successfully promoting viable alternative livelihoods. In Tanzania, civil society efforts to educate about the hazards of tobacco and promote alternatives are working. Between 2006 and 2014, maize and rice production increased by 352 per cent and 277 per cent respectively, while pigeon peas and sunflower increased by 5739 per cent and 248 per cent respectively. In contrast, tobacco production increased by 583 per cent from 2006 to 2009, but dropped by 491 per cent between 2010 and 2014. Farmers’ testimonials indicate that increasing alternative crops results in improved livelihoods.

Malaysia, though with a small tobacco farming population, has taken a different approach, shifting many tobacco farmers to growing kenaf for export. Kenaf-growing has improved returns with only small capital and labour investments. Kenaf is not poisonous, chemical use is limited, children are not involved in cultivation and economic returns support their education. The government provides a subsidy and marketing support.

Complex economic dynamics in two of the world’s largest tobacco producers, suggest a multi-pronged approach in major tobacco-growing countries. A programme to move Chinese farmers to other crops significantly increased household incomes. Evidence reveals that incomes of tobacco farmers in non-Party Indonesia, who reallocated resources to other local crops, rose 25 per cent in one year compared to tobacco-growing households. This growth came partly from non-agricultural activities because farmers reported requiring hundreds of fewer hours of agricultural work, suggesting that viable solutions include non-agricultural activities.

Developing sustainable markets for non-tobacco crops remains a major challenge. Relevant authorities should help to enhance supply chains and develop markets for alternative crops. Small improvements in the value chain such as light processing could help to grow farmers’ incomes. Finally, governments could make modest investments to support agricultural extension services for alternative crops.

Mary Assunta, Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance
Jeff Drope, American Cancer Society
Laura Graen, Unfairtobacco
Lutgard Kagaruki, Tanzania Tobacco Control Forum
Marty Otañez, University of Colorado, Denver
Sonja von Eichborn, Unfairtobacco

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ta6.org/growing
The Tobacco-Free Finance Pledge (The Pledge) was launched at a High-Level event on 26 September 2018 at United Nation’s Headquarters, New York, on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly.

Tobacco Free Portfolios (an NGO that encourages tobacco-free finance) was thrilled to launch The Pledge in partnership with the UN-supported Principles for Responsible Investment, the UN Environment’s Principles for Sustainable Insurance and the UN Environment Programme Finance Initiative.

The four Founding Financial Partners – BNP Paribas (largest bank in Europe), AXA (largest insurer in the world), Natixis (French bank) and AMP Capital (Australian Fund Manager) have all announced implementation of tobacco-free finance policies in recent years and as a result they no longer lend money to, invest in or insure tobacco companies. They are part of a building global momentum in the finance sector that has seen more than US$ 12 Billion shifted away from tobacco investment in the past few years.

The Pledge aims to celebrate and recognise the leading financial organisations that have moved to tobacco-free finance and to encourage others to follow suit. There were more than 90 ‘Founding Signatories’ of The Pledge including some of the world’s largest banks, insurers and pension funds, with headquarters in 18 different countries. The total amount of money controlled by the Founding Signatories is more than US$ 6.5 Trillion.

Over the next two years, Tobacco Free Portfolios will be working hard to recruit more Signatories and to advance and escalate the tobacco-free finance conversation across the globe. In 2020 we will regroup at the UN with more Signatories, Supporters, partners and progress.

And while we are here at COP8 – it is important to remind Parties to the Treaty that government-controlled pension funds and Sovereign Wealth funds are required implement tobacco-free investment policies as per the WHO FCTC. The provisions of the Treaty that relate to this issue have received scant attention by finance ministers across the globe and that needs to change.

We warmly welcome NGOs and health groups to become Supporters of The Pledge.

Bronwyn King, Tobacco Free Portfolios

The bulletin team would like to apologise for failing to credit Allen Gallagher from the University of Bath, UK. Allen wrote yesterday’s insightful piece featured on p. 7 about the Tobacco Industry and their tactics to undermine the Illicit Trade Protocol. Sorry Allen!
Tobacco control is essential to protect the human rights to health and life. Those who framed the WHO FCTC based the treaty on human rights from the beginning. It is important for Parties to follow up on COP7 Decision 26 on International Cooperation for implementation of the FCTC, including human rights, at this COP to ensure that tobacco control is included in the human rights framework.

The progress report from the Convention Secretariat on implementation assistance and international cooperation mentions interaction between the Secretariat and Human Rights Bodies, but this interaction has been limited. As a result, the Secretariat has missed several opportunities to promote the FCTC in various UN Human Rights processes.

COP8 must provide direction to the Secretariat as there are good opportunities to promote the FCTC in various human rights fora in the near future. These provide unique platforms to highlight the FCTC as a tool to achieve not only public health objectives, but also human rights and development objectives. This aligns with the global strategy which emphasizes the need to forge alliances and promote tobacco control efforts with other sectors beyond health.

Over the past few years, several Human Rights Committees have recognized the link between tobacco control and human rights. These committees have recommended the adoption of tobacco control measures in order to fulfill treaty obligations and protect the right to health. It is time for the Secretariat to strengthen that link and promote the inclusion of the FCTC as an indicator of effective protection of the right to health.

The COP should give a mandate to the FCTC Secretariat to work with human rights institutions and particularly the UN HR Council to ensure integrative support for the implementation and review of the WHO FCTC which would include engaging in the intercessional meetings for dialogue and cooperation of human rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development per the UN Human Rights Counsel Resolution HRC/37/L.37. These one-day meetings will be held in Geneva, and would not have any financial implications. We strongly support the adoption of a COP8 decision on Human Rights.