The human rights system provides a relevant and robust set of global mechanisms that can assist countries in accelerating FCTC implementation and achieving health and development objectives. Including tobacco control in national human rights efforts promotes policy coherence, more efficiently utilizes existing resources, and adds a powerful argument to combat tobacco industry interference.

The nexus between tobacco and human rights is clear, particularly in the case of the rights to health and life recognized in numerous human rights treaties and national constitutions, but encompassing many other rights as well.

Human rights were part of the FCTC story from its inception. References appear in the text itself and in several Guidelines and decisions. A growing number of human rights bodies have recognized the importance of governmental action on tobacco control as part of their human rights obligations.

The connection between tobacco and human rights was cemented at the 2018 World Conference on Tobacco or Health, which adopted the Cape Town Declaration on Human Rights and a Tobacco-free World (and ratified by 165 organizations), recognizing the “manufacture, advertising, and marketing of tobacco products as violations of the right to health.” This mirrored the sentiment of the Danish Institute for Human Rights in 2017: “Tobacco is deeply harmful to human health, and there can be no doubt that the production and marketing of tobacco is irreconcilable with the human right to health. For the tobacco industry, the [United Nations Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights] therefore require the cessation of the production and marketing of tobacco.”

The delegation from Palau illustrated their commitment to tobacco as a human rights issue by making an oral intervention at the recently concluded 41st session of the UN HRC.
Oceania Customs Organisation and WHO working together to promote healthier and safer Pacific

The 21st Oceania Customs Organisation (OCO) Annual Meeting was held from 13-16 May 2019 in Saipan, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI). WHO tobacco control focal point for the Division of Pacific Technical Support, Ada Moadsiri, participated on the panel on revenue mobilization along with representatives from the World Customs Organization, OCO, the Cook Islands Revenue Management Division, and the Pacific Financial Technical Assistance Centre.

Ada presented information on Pacific experience with tobacco excise tax implementation and tobacco licensing. She highlighted the importance of the role of customs agencies in protecting public health and emphasized how the cost (expenditures) of NCDs to Pacific governments far outweigh any perceived benefit of tobacco trade revenue. Further, she encouraged customs colleagues to liaise with health counterparts to become familiar with tobacco control laws so that customs agencies may support enforcement.

The 2019 Palau Pledge Challenge generates great interest from school youth

Friends of Palau National Marine Sanctuary (FRIENDS), the Palau National Marine Sanctuary (PNMS) and Koror State Government Solid Waste Management challenged school youth in grades 1 to 12 to take action to protect the environment and collect cigarette filters/butts during the month of March. Students from fourteen (14) schools responded to the challenge and collected a total of 145 lbs (65.8 kg) of the butts. Organizers were proud to announce winners in time for Earth Day in April. The first place winner collected 18 lbs and received the grand prize of USD $500 while the 2nd place winner collected 17.5 lbs and received USD $250 and the 3rd place class collected 17 lbs winning USD $100. Plans for safe disposal are being worked on in collaboration with Koror State Solid Waste Management.

The project created great interest among the students and increased their awareness about how tobacco negatively impacts our oceans. While the banning of plastic straws is becoming popular (several restaurants in Palau have voluntarily stopped their use), focused efforts should also be placed on cigarette filters/butts that are the single greatest source of ocean pollution. 

See continuation page 3
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Cigarette filters are made of a plastic called cellulose acetate. A typical cigarette butt can take anywhere from 18 months to 10 years to decompose, depending on conditions. According to a World Health Organization (WHO) report, they also contain “over 7000 toxic chemicals, including known human carcinogens, which leach into and accumulate in the environment. This toxic waste ends up on our streets, in our drains and in our water. Research has shown that harmful chemicals leached from discarded butts, which include nicotine, arsenic and heavy metals, can be acutely toxic to aquatic organisms; research into their longer term effects on water supply are ongoing”.

Tobacco’s interaction with sustainable development goal (SDG) 14 - Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development is clear.

To read about tobacco’s linkages to other SDGs, see the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control - An Accelerator for Sustainable Development.

Wellness NCD Alliance forms in the Solomon Islands

The Non Communicable Diseases (NCD) unit of the Ministry of Health and Medical Services (MHMS) represented by Dr. Geoffrey Kenilorea, engaged local civil society groups to establish a non communicable diseases initiative. With support from the Pacific Community (SPC), twenty-five participants from civil society and the MHMS met for two days in mid June in Honiara to discuss details of establishing a Wellness NCD Alliance.

The call to engage civil society comes in response to the threat posed by non communicable diseases and their risk factors such as tobacco use, to health and national development especially in low and middle income countries like the Solomon Islands.

Key outcomes of the workshop included 1) agreement to establish a NCD Alliance to engage in NCD prevention and management control efforts in the Solomon Islands; 2) clarification of governance arrangements for the Alliance; 3) identified strategic objectives and a work plan aligned with the Solomon Islands Multi-sectoral National NCD Plan 2019-2023; and 4) a commitment to create and expand the Alliance network to foster knowledge exchange, share evidence based NCD best practices, and identify potential technical and funding sources to sustain the Alliance.

An interim committee was nominated with a core mandate to oversee the establishment of the Wellness NCD Alliance including the nomination of the Board of Governance. The interim committee includes a diverse group of representatives from MHMS, networks from youth, women, sports, faith and the media, the former Auditor General, and the Office of the Attorney General.
WHO Western Pacific Region holds consultation on regional action plan for tobacco control

In February, regional experts reviewed a new draft Regional Action Plan (RAP) for tobacco control in the Western Pacific. The plan takes into account the new Global Strategy to Accelerate Tobacco Control, which sets global priorities to maximize impact on tobacco use around the world.

Based on feedback from the experts, the plan was revised and presented for consideration to 25 participants from 24 member states and areas from the WHO Western Pacific Region during a consultation held from 30 April to 2 May 2019. Participants agreed with the mission, vision, goal and overall target of the draft; actively engaged in discussion around each of the strategic objectives and their respective indicators and actions for member states and areas, as well as for WHO; and discussed and agreed on how the new RAP would be implemented, supported and evaluated.

The new plan has new focus on preventing tobacco industry interference and addressing emerging products. It identifies areas of WHO focused support to countries on tobacco control. Final revisions will be made based on this input and the RAP will be presented for endorsement at the 70th Regional Committee Meeting that will be held 7-11 October 2019 in Manila.

Five PICs will deliver their voluntary national reviews at High Level Political Forum

Every July, countries gather to review and discuss progress implementing the 2030 agenda for sustainable development. Five Pacific island countries - Fiji, Nauru, Palau, Tonga, and Vanuatu will be presenting their voluntary national reviews (VNRs) at the UN High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) in New York this July.

The VNRs are the cornerstone of the follow-up and review process and aim to facilitate the sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, with a view to accelerating implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The VNRs also seek to strengthen policies and institutions of governments and to mobilize multi-stakeholder support and partnerships for the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Three more Pacific island countries will be preparing VNRs in 2020 - Federated States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands while Samoa will be presenting their 2nd VNR in 2020. Reports can be reviewed at https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/.
Oceania Tobacco Control Conference (OTCC) 2019 - Making Tobacco Control a Priority

OTCC provides a unique opportunity for a ‘meeting of minds,’ bringing together tobacco control researchers, advocates, policy makers and program administrators from Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Island nations.

Keynote speakers will be Stella Bialous whose research focuses on the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) and tobacco industry monitoring and Andrew Pipe, Canada’s foremost expert on smoking cessation.

Presentations will be made by several Pacific island countries/territories including Kiribati, Tuvalu, Solomon Islands, Cook Islands, Guam and the Republic of the Marshall Islands.

Additionally, there will be a half day workshop for Pacific island delegates who will share experiences getting tobacco control on national and regional agendas, respectively. Workshop participants will review the Global Strategy to Accelerate Tobacco Control and the Western Pacific Regional Action Plan (RAP) and discuss how countries might prioritize specific tobacco control actions and prepare to elevate them to national and regional agendas.

Scholarships to attend the conference have been generously awarded to several participants.


Congratuations to Fiji

The Head of the Convention Secretariat Dr. Vera Luiza da Costa e Silva met with Dr. Ifereimi Waqainabete, Honorable Minister of Health and Medical Services of Fiji to congratulate Fiji on becoming the 52nd Party to the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products effective 24 April, 2019.

Tobacco-Free National Arts Festival in Vanuatu

Vanuatu Government is staging the 4th National Arts Festival 18-23 August in Malampa Province when cultural heritage will be showcased. The Ministry of Health is pleased to announce that the event will be tobacco-free. Vanuatu successfully hosted the Tobacco Free Pacific Mini Games in 2017.
WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY: MAY 31, 2019

See full WNTD booklet here
Together we can make our islands tobacco-free through intensified tobacco control. Protect Our Youth, Our Future...

Start the FSM Tobacco-Free Revolution..."
Framework Convention Alliance in the Pacific Islands

Working together to free the world from the devastating health, social, economic and environmental consequences of tobacco and tobacco use

The Framework Convention Alliance (FCA) represents the voice of civil society in support of the world’s first global public health treaty – the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The FCA is made up of nearly 500 organizations from more than 100 low, middle and high income countries.

For membership information: write to membership@fctc.org.

FCA publishes the Bulletin and Tobacco Watch
http://www.fctc.org/publications

FCA has representatives in all WHO regions. The Western Pacific—Pacific Island Countries Regional Office (WPRO– Oceania) of FCA is located in Palau. The Coordinator is Annabel Lyman.

The Office’s main activities are:
- Mobilise and support civil society capacity in support of the FCTC
- Collaborate with other technical assistance providers serving the Pacific Islands
- Provide technical assistance to members & Parties

For more information contact the Coordinator

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Important Dates


7-11 October: Regional Committee for the Western Pacific: seventieth session, Manila, Philippines

13-15 October: 15th Annual Conference on Tobacco Induced Diseases, Tokyo, Japan. See http://www.isptid.org/


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Thanks to Cancer Council Australia (CCA) for generous support to tobacco control in the Pacific

FCA Members in Pacific Island Countries
- Coalition for a Tobacco Free Palau (CTFP)
- Global Youth Leadership Nexus (GYLN) (Solomon Islands)
- Kumit Bobrae Coalition Inc. (Marshall Islands)
- Marshall Islands Epidemiology and Prevention Initiatives, Inc. (MIEPI)
- Kia-Henry Nema (Papua New Guinea)
- Nauru National Women’s Council
- Samoa Cancer Society (SCS)
- The Child of the South Pacific Incorporated Society (Niue)
- Tobacco Free Coalition Kosrae (Federated States of Micronesia)
- Tonga Family Health Association
- Tuvalu Association of NGOs (TANGO)
- Ulkerreuil a Klengar– UAK  (Palau)

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