

Press statement
First ministerial meeting 20 July 2015 on plain tobacco packaging

The Ministers and their representatives of Australia, France, Hungary, Ireland, Norway, New Zealand, South Africa, Sweden, United Kingdom, Uruguay, and the Head of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Secretariat met in Paris today to discuss ways to reduce tobacco use through effective tobacco control strategies and policies, especially standardized packaging of tobacco products.

During the meeting, ministers expressed their aspiration for a tobacco free society and discussed the ongoing considerable burden on society of tobacco use, especially heart disease, cancer and respiratory diseases.

Some countries have achieved reductions in tobacco use by implementing effective, evidence-based tobacco control policies as set out in the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), an international treaty which entered into force in 2005, and shared this valuable insight today with their peers.

Many smokers start using tobacco at a very young age meaning that they are addicted to using tobacco before adulthood. During the meeting, ministers expressed their concern about young people and women taking up tobacco use.

Ministers discussed the effect of advertising and promotion of tobacco products, especially concerning the design of tobacco packages and products. They acknowledged that significant scientific evidence exists to justify the introduction of standardized packaging.

Evidence suggests that standardized packaging is likely to have important public health benefits including:

- reducing the appeal of tobacco products to consumers, especially women and young people;
- increasing the effectiveness of health warnings on the packaging of tobacco products; and
- reducing the ability of tobacco packaging to mislead consumers about the harmful effects of smoking;

Ministers stressed the need to keep tobacco control as a high level priority on international and national health agendas and the need to continue searching for innovative measures to reduce tobacco use, especially to stop future generations

from using tobacco. Changing social attitudes and norms around the use of tobacco is vital. Additionally, the WHO FCTC highlighted the need to become Party to the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products and to promote the implementation of its provisions.

Ministers reaffirmed their desire to join forces to defend tobacco control policies and laws from the vested interests to the tobacco industry, as required by the FCTC. Governments around the world are encouraged to maximize transparency in their relations with the tobacco industry, in line with the obligations of the WHO FCTC Article 5.3.

Ministers expressed their support to the Convention Secretariat in promoting the implementation of the WHO FCTC and committed to continue to work closely together to promote the implementation of standardized packaging of tobacco. Ministers and their representatives agreed to consider common initiatives in support of standardized packaging in view of the next World Health Assembly in 2016.