



# UNITED NATIONS AD HOC INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE ON TOBACCO CONTROL

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**REPORT OF THE SECOND SESSION  
INDIA ROOM, FAO, ROME  
7 MARCH 2000**

## **1) Opening and Overview of Second Session of the Task Force:**

The second session of the United Nations Ad Hoc Interagency Task Force on Tobacco control was convened in the India Room, FAO, Rome, 7 March 2000. Twelve United Nations Organizations as well as the World Trade Organization participated in the second session of the Task Force. The Task Force was opened by the Chairperson Dr Bill Kean, Director, Department of External Cooperation and Partnerships (WHO). Dr Kean provided a brief overview of the genesis of the Task Force and noted that new interagency partnerships had been initiated since the first session of the Task Force. The Chair stressed the need to finalize the mechanics for completing the Secretary-General's report to the Substantive Session of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) in good time.

On behalf of the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Mr Hartwig de Haen, (Assistant Director General, Economic and Social Department) welcomed the Task Force members to FAO, and welcomed the recent collaboration between FAO, WHO, the World Bank, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) on a new multidisciplinary study focusing on the underlying economic and social factors affecting tobacco production and consumption. Mr de Haen noted that the negative health effects of tobacco need to be emphasized, while at the same time it must be recognized that tobacco still represents a major crop in some developing countries.

## **2) WHO Update on Progress since the First Session of the Task Force:**

Dr Yach, Project Manager, Tobacco Free Initiative, noted that since the first meeting of the Task Force three WHO international conferences have helped to move global tobacco control forward in the following key areas:

- The conference focusing on Women and Tobacco which was held in Kobe, Japan from 14-18 November 1999, brought together a wide range of groups, including delegates from women's NGOs and the Committee on the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) who had not been previously concerned with tobacco control issues. New research was commissioned for this conference which demonstrates that lung cancer is overtaking breast cancer as a major cause of death among women in many countries. The conference also identified gender dimensions to tobacco control; recommended a stronger focus on women as leaders in the tobacco control movement; identified the upcoming Beijing plus Five meeting as an opportunity to expand the tobacco control constituency; stressed that passive smoking in the home has major detrimental effects on women's health; and urged that a gender perspective is incorporated throughout the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and its related protocols.

- ❑ The Global Tobacco Control and Law Conference, held in New Delhi India from 7-9 January 2000 revealed new data demonstrating the negative health and economic impact of tobacco use in India; revealed a higher degree of support amongst farmers to shift out of tobacco; and stressed that the effects of demand reduction will be in terms of decades, and not according to the drastic scenarios portrayed by the tobacco industry. Further, the outputs of this conference stressed the need to establish national multisectoral institutions to further the FCTC process and its later implementation.
- ❑ The recent WHO conference on “Advancing knowledge on regulating tobacco products” held in Oslo 9-11 February 2000 brought together public health experts, regulators and policy-makers to define core public health goals and areas of research needed to consolidate the scientific basis of tobacco product regulation. During this conference it was generally agreed that transnational approaches are vital; that there is no “safe cigarette”; that the addictiveness of nicotine and the toxicity of tobacco products provides the rationale for a regulatory framework, and that the provision of consumer information plays a fundamental role in product regulation strategies. It was also observed that the FTC/ISO methods currently in use are not intended to measure the biological or epidemiological impact of tobacco products, but rather measure the performance of tobacco products. Moreover, it was stressed that regulatory agencies should be prepared to evaluate and to respond to changes in tobacco product design, and to assess their health impact. It was recommended that a WHO group of experts be convened to guide international policy development with regards to the regulation of tobacco products.

### **3) Partnerships for Tobacco Control:**

The World Bank’s work on tobacco control is being conducted in close partnership with WHO’s Tobacco Free Initiative, and with other organizations, including the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Office of Smoking and Health, the IMF, the UN Foundation, FAO and other organizations. Given the World Bank’s comparative advantage in economics and policy dialogue, the Bank’s efforts are focused on the economics of tobacco control, including taxation, the economic and social impact of tobacco control measures, including the impact on the poor, and the cost-effectiveness of interventions. The following is a partial list of the World Bank’s tobacco-related work:

- ❑ Disseminating the messages and recommendations in “*Curbing the Epidemic*” through the World Wide Web, television-public service announcement, print translations into 11 languages, journal articles, and presentations at regional and country meetings.
- ❑ Discussions with economists at the Bank and IMF to get their help in carrying the dialogue at country level.
- ❑ Analyses of the economics of tobacco are underway in Estonia, Latvia, Indonesia, Turkey, Poland, China, and are planned in South Africa, Sri Lanka, Zimbabwe, Venezuela (to be funded by the Pan American Health Organization of WHO), and India (to be Funded by the South East Asian Regional Office of WHO).
- ❑ Model terms of reference have been prepared to help guide the work, and for others to use who wish to carry out similar work.
- ❑ At tool kit is under preparation, that will provide detailed guidance and assistance to researchers/analysts wishing to conduct economic analysis in their own country.

- Analytic work on the links between poverty and tobacco, using rich household data sets for several countries, will commence soon.
- Thus far, 12 Bank-funded projects in 11 countries have included tobacco control activities, and several more are currently under preparation.

Following the World Bank's update the other Task Force Members provided an update of their tobacco related work and touched on possibilities for future interagency collaboration as follows:

- **FAO:** noted that a training-cum-assistance programme on policies for crop diversification in Malawi is underway as part of a broader UNDP programme. This programme is expected to address the concern that Malawi is heavily reliant on tobacco and maize, and thus would suffer from a collapse in the market for tobacco, which is its most important export. Environmental and food security/nutrition dimensions will also be considered in the programme, which is not explicitly directed to reducing production of a harmful substance. The first stage of the programme included a review of previous diversification studies and a training workshop that took place in February 2000.
- **ICAO:** noted that the organization's 1992 resolution has led to an irreversible trend towards smoke-free airlines. It was suggested that WHO's counteradvertising messages should be considered for inclusion in airline magazines, and also that airlines should be encouraged not to advertise tobacco products in their magazines. WHO also suggested that ICAO's work could be integrated into the 2001 World No Tobacco Day which will focus on passive smoking: in this regard a possible theme could be to "bring nonsmoking down to earth."
- **ILO:** The ILO's areas of concern relate to employment, workplace health issues, and the promotion of social dialogue. Regarding the first area, a study on employment trends and conditions in the bidi industry in India, including the effects of tobacco control initiatives, is being finalized with a view to elaborating alternative employment strategies for bidi workers, many of whom are women. It is proposed to hold a tripartite workshop to discuss the results of the study and to come up with strategies for creating sustainable, productive, and safe jobs. The second area, in which the ILO has considerable experience is the promotion of healthy workplaces. Smoke-free workplaces could be an expansion of these activities. Social dialogue is the mechanism through which such programmes can be developed.
- **UNDCP:** has been collaborating with WHO on addiction related issues for some years. Although tobacco is not within the UNDCP's mandate the organization is keen to share its monitoring expertise with WHO. WHO noted that the organization would be focusing more attention on work in the area of neuro-addiction, and will want to take advantage of UNDCP's expertise in this area. Moreover, the lessons learned, and failures encountered, from the extensive investment in supply side interventions and crop substitution to control illicit drugs would be of value in mapping out future tobacco control strategies.
- **UNESCO:** The representative from UNESCO felt that the Organization could play a more proactive role in the Task Force's work, and will be making this recommendation to UNESCO's Director-General. It was noted that UNESCO publications are distributed worldwide and could be used to disseminate WHO's counteradvertising messages; for instance, one UNESCO journal is published and distributed in numerous languages.
- **WTO:** The WTO representative observed that the Tobacco Free Initiative's work could have an impact on a number of different WTO agreements. It was suggested that technical collaboration between WTO and WHO with respect to

trade-related aspects of the FCTC would be a possible area for future collaboration.

#### **4) Update on FAO Project:**

As noted in the introductory welcome by Mr de Haen, FAO and the Swedish International Development Agency (SIDA) have together contributed US\$250,000 to fund an interagency project that will focus on how government policies toward tobacco impact on the tobacco economy. The Steering Committee for this project, comprised of FAO, WHO, World Bank, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada, met before the Task Force meeting to clarify the terms of reference for the study, as well as the roles and responsibilities for the different partners. The ILO also attended the Steering Committee meeting as an observer.

This study will provide detailed information on the underlying economic and social factors affecting tobacco production and consumption. It will analyze the effect that policy changes will have on agricultural production, employment, household income and food security and will project world tobacco supply, demand and trade to 2010 under different scenarios. The study will be conducted initially in the following seven countries: Brazil, Malawi, Macedonia, Turkey, China, India and Zimbabwe. FAO explained that this study is expected to be completed early in 2001, and will provide policy makers with information about possible adjustment needs in the future.

WHO noted that a tobacco fund was established in 1993 by the European Community to fund research and information projects focusing on improving public, and in particular young people's, knowledge of the harmful effects of using tobacco, and towards steering tobacco production towards the least harmful varieties, qualities, and products. This fund amounts to 2% of the European Communities' annual agricultural subsidies for tobacco (approximately 1 billion Euro). It is possible that an application for research funds under this grant scheme could be made to cover research, under the umbrella of the FAO led project, focusing on accession countries, for example Turkey, and possibly Macedonia.

#### **5) Interaction with Trade Unions:**

WHO noted that evidence from the industry disclosure documents reveals that the stance of some trade unions is directly influenced by the position of the tobacco industry itself. However, other trade unions acknowledge that tobacco kills and harms an increasing number of workers. A recent resolution passed by the State Building and Construction Trade Council in California takes this position. WHO noted that partnerships with trade unions for tobacco control will become increasingly important as trade unions shift their policies towards healthy workplace policies. The fact that employers have been challenged by employees for being exposed to tobacco in the workplace is creating a demand for restrictions on smoking. ICAO noted that a similar trend has been witnessed in the airline industry.

The ILO stated that several issues are involved that are not diametrically opposed. The first relates to employment security and alternative livelihood possibilities for tobacco workers, whether in agriculture or manufacturing. The second concerns the health of all workers and providing healthy workplace environments. Trade unions are concerned about both. Social dialogue will be an important process for finding appropriate solutions.

## **6) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control Working Group and Opportunities for Interagency Collaboration:**

Dr Bettcher, Coordinator FCTC Team, WHO reviewed the Framework Convention process, and the milestones for the FCTC Working Group and targets for completion of the negotiations by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body. During the first meeting of the FCTC Working Group the following areas of consensus were reached:

- ❑ The FCTC and its related protocols should focus on demand reduction strategies;
- ❑ Evidence-based interventions should be emphasized;
- ❑ An incremental, comprehensive approach to negotiating an international legal regime for tobacco was needed. This approach would build on the World Health Assembly's past 16 resolutions, which provide a test of WHO's mandate in different areas including, inter alia, bans on advertising, hikes in tobacco taxes, policies to encourage smoke free workplaces and public places, smoking cessation, and a range of other strategies.
- ❑ A general architecture for the Framework Convention was agreed to in principle;
- ❑ The importance of taking account of the social, economic, agricultural impacts of tobacco control, especially in developing countries, was emphasized.

The second and final meeting of the FCTC Working Group will be held in Geneva from 27-29 March 2000. This intergovernmental technical body will set the technical and scientific foundation for the FCTC and possible related protocols in preparation for the launch of formal negotiations in the autumn of this year. Dr Bettcher provided an overview of possible obligations as outlined in Document A/FCTC/WG2/3, "Provisional texts of proposed draft elements for a WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control", and also reviewed the technical components for three possible initial protocols on advertising and sponsorship, the elimination of tobacco smuggling, and the treatment of tobacco dependence.

Possible FCTC related areas for interagency collaboration were identified as follows:

- ❑ Possible provisions on restricting tobacco sales to youth and children, and youth related surveillance systems, would have direct links to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its State Reporting Guidelines thereto;
- ❑ In the development of the reporting and monitoring provisions under Element IV of the FCTC, the experience of monitoring under the drug control treaties provide a base of collaboration with UNDCP;
- ❑ Possible provisions pertaining to the elimination of smuggling would benefit from institutional linkages with the World Customs Union;
- ❑ Potential provisions pertaining to the protection from exposure to passive smoking in the workplace would complement several ILO conventions focusing on occupational health and safety;
- ❑ Possible provisions being considered for inclusion in the FCTC and related protocols would potentially overlap with the WTO single package of trade agreements, including, inter alia, the Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade Agreement (TBT) (package and labelling), the Agreement on Agriculture (reduction of government support to tobacco production), the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) (restrictions on advertising), and the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) (taxes, prohibitions, and human-health related exceptions to GATT rules). The aim of collaboration between WTO and WHO would be to look for areas of synergy between the 2 legal regimes, in order that the two agreements could be read together. Towards this end, it would be worthwhile to look at the compatibility of the trade measures contained in the Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) and the WTO rules, an issue

which has been much discussed in the WTO Committee on Trade and Environment (CTE). It was noted that several of the potential inconsistencies between the MEAs and the WTO rules have arisen in the past as a result of the lack of proper coordination between trade and environment officials both at the national and international levels.

- Proposed provisions focusing on education would benefit from collaboration with UNESCO;
- The integration of a gender perspective in the FCTC and its related protocols, opens the door for partnerships between WHO and the CEDAW Committee, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) of the United Nations, and UNFPA;
- Potential obligations protecting the public from the effects of passive smoking would link with ICAO's successful strategies;
- Finally, possible national obligations for incorporating tobacco cessation treatments into reproductive health programmes such as Safe Motherhood suggest areas of further collaboration with UNFPA.

It was agreed that the work of the Task Force provides a platform for initiating technical work which can be channelled directly into the FCTC process.

### **7) Briefing on Tobacco Smuggling:**

WHO provided an overview of the industry arguments regarding tobacco smuggling, and an update on recent events linking certain tobacco companies with smuggling activities. It was observed that the Government of Canada is claiming that the RJ Reynolds group of companies defrauded the Canadian people by conspiring with known distributors and smugglers to illegally smuggle their tobacco products into Canada. The Canadian lawsuit is being launched in the United States under the statute known as the Federal Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organisations Act (RICO). Further, in February 2000 the Guardian (United Kingdom) and the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists published reports concerning the alleged involvement of BAT with smuggling activities.

These reports are particularly interesting, considering that the tobacco industry usually contends that increasing tobacco taxes will inevitably lead to illegal contraband of tobacco products, notably cigarettes. Discrepancies in tobacco prices between countries, it is argued, creates an incentive to smuggle. In 1994, this argument persuaded the Canadian government to lower dramatically its tobacco taxes. Sweden in 1998 and more recently the Ukraine both also lowered their taxes or excise duties in the hope that it would diminish the size of the contraband market. It is important to note that in Sweden and Canada, government revenue from tobacco dipped after the tax cut.

The World Bank in its 1999 Report, emphasized that action against smuggling is key to an effective strategy for tobacco control. Tight controls on smuggling improve governments' revenue yields from tobacco tax increases. The World Bank also stressed that the determinants of smuggling are much more than price alone. Using standard indicators of corruption, levels based on Transparency International's Index of Countries, the World Bank concluded that, with notable exceptions, the level of tobacco smuggling tends to rise in line with the degree of corruption in a country. It is against this backdrop that the Member States of WHO are considering the negotiation of a protocol to eliminate tobacco smuggling, thereby addressing a major transnational public health threat.

## 8) Update on World No Tobacco Day:

WHO noted that in May World No Tobacco Day: Entertainment 2000, will be launched in Bangkok by the King of Thailand.

The theme for 2001 will be passive smoking, an issue which concerns people in their everyday lives. Within the UN system itself it was suggested that protection of employees from the passive smoking could be an area for concerted interagency collaboration. It was suggested that an interagency working group on workplace policies could be established as a means of pushing this issue forward within the United Nations system.

## 9) Secretary General's report to the Substantive Session of ECOSOC:

Mr Sarbuland Khan, Director, Division for ECOSOC Support and Coordination, opened this agenda item with an explanation of the ECOSOC reporting process. The Secretary General's report on progress made by the Task Force in implementation of multisectoral collaboration on tobacco or health will be presented under the coordination questions portion of the general segment of ECOSOC in July 2000. The deadline for submission of the English version of the report is 30 April 2000: the French and Spanish translations may be submitted a few weeks past this deadline. It was suggested that the Task Force may wish to assemble a multidisciplinary panel during the segment in which the report will be discussed.

Members of the Task Force discussed a preliminary outline of the report. It was agreed that the general outline of the report will be as follows:

- ❑ **Part I: Origins of the Task Force:** this section will review the decision of the Organizational Committee of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, 12 April 1999, and ECOSOC Resolution 1999/56.
- ❑ **Part II: Overview of the public health, social, and economic implications of the global tobacco epidemic.** This section will provide an overview of the public health trends related to tobacco as a major determinant of 25 major categories of fatal and disabling disease. This section will also analyse the socioeconomic issues related to the control of tobacco use, including, inter alia, crop diversification and supply side issues, employment opportunities and sustainable livelihoods, trade issues, and issues related to smuggling.
- ❑ **Part III: Tobacco related work within the UN System and new areas for interagency collaboration.** This section will focus on new areas of multisectoral collaboration which have evolved since the establishment of the Task Force. This aspect of the report has the potential to catalyze convergence and support for tobacco control from different governmental ministries. Moreover, it was felt that this section of the report should suggest roles and activities for the UN Resident Coordinator, and for specific Government Ministries.
- ❑ **Part IV:** This section will focus on the FCTC process and opportunities for interagency collaboration.
- ❑ **Part V:** The concluding section will suggest important areas for future interagency cooperation. The recommendations and conclusions will be forward thinking and will suggest positive steps to be taken in the future.

The agreed timeline, and agreed actions by Task Force members, are as follows:

- Submission of individual written contributions to the report by Task Force members to WHO no later than 15 March 2000;

- Distribution by WHO to all Task Force members of the first draft of the final report by 7 April 2000;
- Submission of the Task Force Members' comments on the draft report to WHO no later than 18 April 2000;
- Preparation and submission by WHO of the final Secretary-General's report to ECOSOC not later than 30 April 2000.

It was agreed that each Task Force member would respect these deadlines in order to ensure that the report is submitted on time.