Ministerial Meeting on

“PACKAGING AND LABELLING OF TOBACCO PRODUCTS: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF ARTICLES 11 and 13 OF THE WHO FCTC”

Geneva, 24th May 2016

Ministerial Declaration

1. We, the Ministers of Health and representatives of Ministers of Canada, Chile, Finland, France, Hungary, Lebanon, Norway, Panama, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Thailand, United Kingdom, and Uruguay;

2. Recognize the fundamental right of every human being to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, and that tobacco control policies, strategies and legislation are legitimate measures to protect public health and contribute to the health and wellbeing of persons, families and communities;

3. Acknowledge that strengthening the implementation of the WHO FCTC to prevent and control tobacco use is essential to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development;

4. Note with concern that the global tobacco epidemic continues to have a severe impact on public health and social equity, with tobacco-related illnesses killing around 6 million people annually, and that the heaviest burden of disease related to tobacco is borne by the most vulnerable population groups;

5. Reaffirm the outcomes of the Ministerial Meeting held in Paris in July 2015, where Ministers of Health of several countries gathered to discuss ways to reduce tobacco use through effective tobacco control strategies and policies, especially plain and standardized packaging of tobacco
products, in order to reach a tobacco free generation, and strengthened international cooperation to achieve these objectives;

6. Recognize the efforts made by countries in curbing the tobacco epidemic and protecting public health, by implementing comprehensive, multisectoral and coordinated approaches to tobacco control in line with the WHO FCTC, including packaging and labelling measures of tobacco products as effective tools to reduce or discourage tobacco use;

7. Acknowledge that tobacco packaging and labelling measures, implemented as part of a set of comprehensive and complementary tobacco control measures, may result in reductions in populations ‘use of tobacco;

8. Further recognize that evidence-based tobacco packaging and labelling measures, consistent with Articles 11 and 13 of the WHO FCTC and its implementation guidelines, have the legitimate objective of protecting public health and are proportional to the magnitude and severity of the harm caused by the tobacco epidemic;

9. Note with concern the frequent and ongoing interference by the tobacco industry to oppose implementation of legitimate public health measures, which is a significant barrier to the effective and timely global tobacco control efforts;

We declare:

10. Our commitment to continue and strengthen efforts to curb the tobacco epidemic and our aspiration for a tobacco free generation, as a means for achieving significant improvement in preventable morbidity and premature mortality rates, in particular the burden of tobacco-related illness, such as heart disease, cancer and respiratory disease.

11. Our support for the implementation of evidence-based measures and successful approaches to tobacco packaging and labelling, including
consideration of the use of large health pictorial warnings, plain and standardized packaging and single presentation per brand legislation, with the aim of reducing the appeal and attractiveness of tobacco packaging as well as preventing tobacco product packaging and labelling from being used for advertising and promoting tobacco products, including by means that are false, misleading, deceptive, or likely to create an erroneous impression about its real hazards to human health.

12. Our commitment to effectively deliver evidence-based information to the population on the addictive and lethal nature of tobacco products as well as potential dangers of new emerging products.

13. Our support to those countries that are being targeted by the tobacco industry’s interference, in particular to those countries that are facing legal challenges.

14. Our determination to give priority to the protection of public health and not to allow tobacco industry interference to delay or deter the implementation of tobacco control measures.

15. Our commitment and call to defend tobacco control measures from the vested interests of the tobacco industry, in line with the obligations under Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC, and continue to cooperate internationally to this end.

16. Our commitment to the full implementation of the WHO FCTC in our countries and our encouragement to other Parties to do likewise, and our appreciation to the FCTC Secretariat and WHO for their joint work in promoting and advancing the implementation of the WHO FCTC.

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