Conference Issue: 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference

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8th Commonwealth Youth Parliament #CYP8 in British Columbia, Canada
A COLLABORATIVE COMMONWEALTH: UNITY, DIVERSITY AND COMMON CHALLENGES

62nd COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARY CONFERENCE
London, United Kingdom
11 to 17 December 2016

UNDP Event - 14 December 2016

COMMONWEALTH PARLIAMENTARIANS DISCUSS TOBACCO CONTROL AND EFFECTIVE PARLIAMENTARY OVERSIGHT

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) held a session for Commonwealth Parliamentarians on the UN Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3: ‘Tobacco Control Frameworks and effective Parliamentary Oversight’ at the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference.

When Members of Parliament from Commonwealth countries met in London for the 62nd Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference, there was an opportunity to advance tobacco control efforts globally. The United Nations Development Programme, along with the Convention Secretariat of the WHQ Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), organized a side event at the conference on the implementation of the WHO FCTC.

The objective of the event was to assist Parliamentarians in engaging more effectively in developing tobacco control legislation and oversight of tobacco policies, learning from experiences across different countries and settings.

Hon. Alando Terrelonge MP, a first term Parliamentarian from Jamaica, reminded assembled MPs of the severity of the tobacco epidemic: “Every six seconds someone dies of a tobacco related illness,” he said. “Legislation is essential in preventing these unnecessary deaths.”

The initiative was driven by the need to help prevent disease
and death caused by tobacco addiction with more targeted laws and regulations.

The building of measures that effectively aid public health have proved beneficial in supporting sustainable development, tackling issues such as poverty reduction, building food security, assisting economic growth, delivering better educational outcomes and improving domestic resource flows.

"Every one of the Sustainable Development Goals has a relevance to tobacco," stressed Lord Faulkner of the United Kingdom. "Take ending poverty in all its forms everywhere. Money spent on tobacco is obviously not available for spending on food, education and healthcare. In some African countries, the poorest households are spending as much as 15% of their disposable income on tobacco," he added.

Parliamentarians in attendance from 10 CPA Branches - the Cook Islands, St Kitts and Nevis, Singapore, Swaziland, Tanzania, the United Kingdom, and Zambia - were asked how tobacco control measures can support their own work and advance sustainable development.

The event also proved a good chance to assess the effectiveness of existing tobacco control laws in the countries represented at the event and provided an opportunity to learn from experiences shared between the Parliamentarians.

Hon. Poto Williams MP, a member of the Health Committee of the Parliament of New Zealand, shared that country's experience of tobacco control. "We saw the harm tobacco was doing in our indigenous communities, with smoking rates twice that of the general population," she said.

"Targeting prevention efforts [and] recognising the needs of our most vulnerable groups have been central to our successes as we move towards a tobacco-free and with civil society on issues vital to the promotion of good governance and sustainable human development."

MPs attending the workshop adopted the following resolution by acclamation: "As a contribution to sustainable development, Parliamentarians must be informed, engaged and assisted to draft - and provide thorough oversight on the enforcement of - legislation for tobacco control as guided by the WHO FCTC."

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