Statement
From the Second Meeting of the International Network of Health Promotion Foundations
Bangkok, March 4-6, 2002

The Ministerial Statement of the 5th Global Conference on Health Promotion in Mexico City (in June 2000) acknowledges the promotion of health and social development as a central duty and responsibility of governments, shared by all sectors of the society.

Health promotion is a cost-effective way to improve public health, improve quality of life, and reduce the economic costs of illness. It deals with the fundamental social, political, economic, cultural and environmental factors that determine the health of a population, in addition to strengthening the skills and understanding of individuals to achieve and maintain their own good health.

We are now at a crucial time when national governments are examining new mechanisms to develop health promotion action plans following the Mexico Conference. Similarly, as the momentum for the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control develops, it becomes apparent that sustainable structures for health promotion is one of the prerequisites for implementation of the Convention at local and country levels.

While health promotion is cost-effective, many countries are in need of new resources to promote health and tackle national priority health problems. The development of Health Promotion Foundations is an innovative way of mobilizing new resources for promoting health and can support research, innovation, and the strengthening of health promotion capacities in the health sector and other sectors such as education, sport, the arts, environment and commerce. Health Promotion Foundations work in a complementary way with Ministries of Health, and other relevant Ministries. Effective models for health promotion infrastructures now exist in several countries (Switzerland, Thailand, Australia, Austria and Korea).

The International Network of Health Promotion Foundations was established in 1999 to enhance the performance of existing Health Promotion Foundations and to assist the development of new Foundations.
The Network has prepared this statement to draw attention to the tremendous potential such Foundations have, in both developing and developed countries, to provide new resources to address major national health challenges and their broad determinants.

Consequently the participants at the meeting strongly assert that:

- To build sustainable capacity and infrastructure for health promotion every country requires, among many things, adequate financing.

- Adaptable and proven fiscal models exist and effectively operate in both developed and developing countries.

- The mechanisms for developing new capacity in health promotion through the establishment of autonomous Health Promotion Foundations at country level include, but are not limited to:
  - A dedicated tax on tobacco, such as VicHealth and Healthway in Australia prior to 1996, Korean Health Promotion Fund;
  - Combination of dedicated taxes on tobacco and alcohol, such as ThaiHealth;
  - A levy on health insurance, such as Health Promotion Switzerland;
  - An appropriation from Treasury budgets, such as Fonds Gesundes Österreich [Austrian Health Promotion Foundation], VicHealth and Healthway post 1996.

As there are current discussions in many countries and at the World Health Assembly about the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, we note one mechanism for financing new capacity in health promotion through a dedicated tax (hypotheenstion) on a harmful product such as tobacco. This has the advantage of increasing the price of tobacco products resulting in lower consumption. Evidence suggests that there do not appear to be any documented cases of reduced revenues for government following tobacco taxes increases. There is plenty of leeway for governments to increase taxes on tobacco - it is popular and all of society benefits through financing the work of health promotion foundations.

Hypotheenstion of tobacco tax enables, on the one hand:

- The funding of a national comprehensive tobacco control programmes;
- The replacement of harmful tobacco company sponsorship in sport, the arts and cultural sectors with health promoting sponsorships;
- Cessation counselling, public communication campaigns, and research to build the evidence-base for tobacco control policies, as well as for health promotion in general.

On the other hand, a hypothcated tobacco tax also enables support for a range of health promotion actions in programmes such as:

- HIV/AIDS control, communicable disease control;
- Prevention of cancer, injury, and substance abuse;
- Promotion of healthy eating, physical activity, and mental health.
National Ministries of Health can play a very constructive role in initiating and establishing legally constituted Health Promotion Foundations. This Second Meeting of the International Network of Health Promotion Foundations requests all countries to give careful and positive consideration to the establishment of appropriately funded health promotion foundations in line with the Mexico Ministerial Statement.

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