WHO Public Hearings on the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control 12-13 October 2000 in Geneva

Submission from EUROPEAN NURSES AND MIDWIVES AGAINST TOBACCO.

European Nurses and Midwives Against Tobacco, ENMAT is a European non-governmental network organization founded in March 2000. Its main aims are to strengthen and enhance the role of nurses and midwives working on tobacco control issues by setting up a strong and active network all around Europe working offensively to create additional possibilities to build up a tobacco-free society.

ENMAT has today key-persons, nurses and midwives in 12 EU countries, Norway and Iceland, working in their own countries, building up networks with nurses and midwives, cooperating with Nurses and Midwives Associations, organizing meetings and conferences, all to get the tobacco control issues on nurses and midwives agenda.

The key persons are forming the basis of a core group who can work towards coordinating future pan European tobacco control activities by nurses and midwives.

The keypersons met on 1st European Network Conference, European Nurses and Midwives, in Stockholm in March 2000 and made plans for building up the network all around Europe. The conference was organized by the steering group of the EU-project European Nurses & Midwives Against Tobacco.

ENMAT started 1999 as an EU-project supported by the European Commission in the framework of Europe Against Cancer. The steering group are planning the next step that will include all European countries.

Our interest in the Framework Convention (FC) is based upon our belief that a global threat like the tobacco epidemic needs to be met by a strong global strategy.

NEEDS OF COORDINATED INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

The tobacco epidemic is a global problem that calls for the widest possible international cooperation by all countries and their participation in an effective, appropriate and coordinated international response.

ENMAT are seriously concerned about the global spread of the tobacco epidemic and the increase in the worldwide consumption and production of cigarettes and other tobacco products, particularly in developing countries.

ENMAT are also concerning of the international community about the devastating worldwide health, social and economic consequences of the tobacco epidemic.

TOBACCO SMUGGLING

ENMAT are deeply concerned about the illegal transboundary traffic in cigarettes and other tobacco products and believes that coordinated action is necessary to eradicate illicit traffic. Smuggling of cigarettes are a big problem in Europe, even in countries with low cost cigarettes.
TOBACCO ADDICTION
Cigarettes are among the most highly engineered consumer products, designed to create and maintain addiction, that many of the compounds they contain are pharmacologically active, toxic, mutagenic and carcinogenic, and that tobacco use is separately classified as a disorder in the International Classification of Diseases (ICD-10).

SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE
For nurses and midwives the scientific evidence are the “base” in the tobacco control work. The scientific evidence has unequivocally established that tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke are causally linked to numerous causes of death, disease and disability. ENMAT (specially midwives) acknowledge that there is also clear scientific evidence that prenatal exposure to tobacco smoke causes adverse health and developmental condition. The tobacco industry tries all the time to refute the scientific evidence and they do it, not always in a “clean” way. We have “good examples” from Sweden Denmark and UK.

FUTURE SMOKERS
ENMAT are deeply concerned about the escalation in smoking and other forms of tobacco consumption by indigenous populations and other minority groups worldwide. An example is East European countries and the rising prevalence of smoking among women.

INTERNATIONAL CO-ORDINATORS
ENMAT acknowledging the competence of the World Health Organization and its leadership role within the United Nations system in the field of tobacco control and calling on international organizations also concerned with such control to coordinate efforts with that Organization.
ENMAT recalling the resolutions of the World Health Assembly on “Tobacco or health” and taking into account the relevant treaties, recommendations, declarations, and other instruments on or relevant to tobacco control issues adopted within the United Nations system and by other international and regional organizations,
ENMAT recalling the preamble to the Constitution of the World Health Organization, which affirms that "the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic or social condition",

WOMEN AND TOBACCO
As an organization including many women but also in the profession meeting a lot of women and young girls ENMAT recalls to the pertinent provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 18 December 1979, and deeply concerned about the escalation in smoking and other forms of tobacco use by women and young girls worldwide, which requires the implementation of gender-specific tobacco control strategies.
Nursing and midwifering are predominantly a female profession and nurses and midwives as professionals are role-models for other women. In Europe there are 6 millions nurses and midwives who can stand on the barricades against tobacco of all levels of policy-making and implementation. We think it is important to recognize the vital leadership role that women provide in tobacco control efforts and affirming the need for the full participation of women in tobacco control at all levels of policy-making and implementation.
Nurses need to be prepared to participate in tobacco control activities at local, regional national, and international levels. It is also important that nurses take an active role in initiating and supporting national and international tobacco control policy and legislation.
TOBACCO CONTROL UNDER-FUNDED
In force of nurses and midwives professionalism, working with people from the first phase of life to the last, they have to take care of an increasing number of tobacco victims. But there is very small resources to take care of the victims, to train nurses in tobacco cessation, to work with tobacco prevention etc. Tobacco control at all levels is seriously under-funded, all over the world compared to the burden of disease it causes, and that new and additional financial and technical resources can be expected to make a substantial difference in the world's capacity to address the tobacco epidemic.

NGO
ENMAT emphasizing the special contribution of nongovernmental organizations, including health professional bodies, women's, youth and environmental groups, academic institutions, private industry, hospitals and other stakeholders in civil society to tobacco control efforts nationally and internationally and the vital importance of their participation in national and international tobacco control efforts.

SUMMARY
Tobacco is responsible for one in 10 adult deaths; by 2030 the figure is expected to be one in six, or 10 million deaths per year - more than any other cause of premature death. If current trends persist, about 500 million people alive in 2000 will eventually be killed by tobacco, half of them in productive middle age, losing 20 to 25 years of life. See Curbing the epidemic: governments and the economics of tobacco control, Washington, D.C., the World Bank, 1999, pp. 22-23.
ENMAT will see a Framework Convention strong enough to hold tobacco companies accountable. Strong enough to support national governments to make decisions in favour of public health. Strong enough to stop smuggling. Strong enough to stop advertising. Strong enough to protect children from passive smoking. Strong enough to protect people from diseases and death caused by tobacco products. Strong enough to start the end of the tobacco epidemic!

We would like to make an oral statement at the Hearings.

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