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

Submission of Arbeitsgemeinschaft Tabakprävention Schweiz (AT), Swiss Association for Smoking Prevention

The AT is the Swiss national non profit association which stimulates and co-ordinates tobacco prevention in Switzerland. Its members are ligues, associations, organisations and institutions on national and regional level, leading activities in the field of health promotion and health care.

The interest of AT, representing its 70 members, to contribute to the public hearing is guided by the main objective of AT, which is smoking prevention.

The damage caused by tobacco consumption
No other legal products are – if used the way the producer suggests – as health damaging as tobacco products. Smoking is still the leading cause of premature death in Switzerland. More than 8'000 deaths annually (out of a total of 62'000) in Switzerland can be linked to tobacco consumption. Switzerland belongs to the European countries showing the highest rates of cigarettes consumption per capita.

Two studies SAPALDIA and SCARPOL conducted in the early 90s, provided evidence for the first time in Switzerland that passive smoking can damage health.

Economical effects
The health costs in Switzerland caused by the health effects of tobacco consumption are 1'200'000'000 Swiss Francs per annum. The lost for the Swiss economy caused by deaths, temporary unfitness for work or invalidity is 3,800'000’000 Swiss Francs per annum.

Statutory measures

Price policy
A study published in 1999 showed clearly that raising the price would have the effect of reducing consumption. To increase the costs of one packet by 0,20 Swiss Francs would reduce consumption by 1,7-2,2% on long term. This measure could be done by the government. If agreement with European Union would be the aim, the increase of the price should be 0,50 Swiss Francs, and this would reduce long term consumption by 4-5,3%. But this would require a alteration of the actual legislation, which takes time and needs a majority.

Advertising
Switzerland is still far away from banning cigarette advertising. A referendum in 1992 showed that not even one third of Swiss citizens were in favour of banning tobacco advertising and sponsoring.

Workplace

1 Passive Smoking Exposure in Adults and Chronic Respiratory Symptoms; SAPALDIA Team; Am J Respir Crit Care Med 1994; 150; 122-8
2 Respiratory Health and Long Term Exposure to Air Pollution in Swiss School Children; Am J Respir Crit Care Med 1997; 155; 1042-9
3 Holly Study
Since 1993, employers have been required to make sure that non-smokers are not exposed to the harmful effects of other people smoking.

**Schools**
The school system is organized at cantonal level. In many cantons, the rules for establishments are a matter for the local authorities or schools. Six of the 26 cantons impose a ban on smoking in schools – confined in practice to pupils.

**Clinics and hospitals**
In practice more than 80% of hospitals do have rules (these seldom involve a total ban on smoking), but no statutory measures apply.

**Catering establishments**
The law on catering establishments trade is enacted at cantonal level. Six out of 26 cantons have included an appropriate article in their law in the sense that “….no-smoking tables shall be offered as far as this is possible for the business concerned.” The most progressive arrangement applies in Ticino canton: in places where food is consumed, at least one-third of the floor space must be reserved for non-smokers.

**Public buildings open to customers**
In the early 80s, the post office already imposed a ban on smoking at its counters. Counter areas in railway stations, at airports and in banks are largely no-smoking zones with smoking islands, but no statutory measures apply.

**Transport**
The public railways have constantly enlarged their no-smoking compartments in railway train carriages. No smoking compartments currently represent around 60 to 70% of the total. Urban transport operations have imposed a ban on smoking for decades. The Swiss airlines have banned smoking in short haul flights for many years and the ban now also applies to long haul traffic with controlled experiments in the use of nicotine preparations.

**Still a long way to go**
Even if the Swiss federal office of public health is trying to put up a decent tobacco control program, there is still the money to find to execute it, which means to convince the government, on certain aspects also the parliament and the same unities on cantonal level, to provide the concerned organisations with the necessary money. Up to now there are 5’000’000 Swiss Francs per annum which can be spent on tobacco prevention in whole Switzerland, the cantonal contributions included. While the tobacco industry is spending 120’000’000 Swiss Francs for Advertising and Sponsoring.

**Using the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control to influence and to promote the initiatives for a effective tobacco prevention on national level**
The treaty of the WHO will have a historic impact on global, but also on national and regional public health. Governments, parliaments, NGO will become aware of the need for statutory measures and health promotion activities as well as school-based programmes to reduce the tobacco consumption and to increase the level of public health. Therefore AT is strongly in favour of pushing the process of discussing the framework convention in order to provide a strong and meaningful treaty on tobacco control.