



Response

All these factors make tobacco control an urgent public health priority, especially among the developing countries of the Western Pacific. Western Pacific Region Member States recognize the gravity of the Region's tobacco epidemic, and affirm the need for effective and immediate action to curb tobacco consumption.

Evidence-based measures to reduce tobacco consumption exist, and are proving effective in several Western Pacific Region Member States that have developed and implemented strong national tobacco control programmes, such as Australia, New Zealand and Singapore. Several other countries in the Region that have begun country-level tobacco control are discovering that weak or inconsistent enforcement of tobacco control policies and laws renders these measures ineffective. The situation is compounded by the globalization of tobacco trade, advertising and marketing, which very often are beyond the reach of even the strongest national policies and laws.

The globalization of the tobacco epidemic necessitates a coordinated response by countries. WHO's Member States successfully negotiated the final text of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control at the sixth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body in Geneva, Switzerland, in February 2003 and the Fifty-sixth World Health Assembly adopted the

text in May 2003. As of 1 December 2004, the required 40 Member States had ratified the Convention enabling it to enter into force on 27 February 2005. The Convention will now be able to help countries to reduce tobacco use and the years of healthy life lost due to tobacco.



While the Convention provides guidelines to reduce the harm from tobacco, definitive action to control tobacco must take place at the national level. Therefore, the success of the Convention will depend almost entirely on the ability of countries to implement and enforce its provisions. Further enhancing national capacity must take place at the same time as efforts to ensure that the Convention is ratified, because Member States need to be ready for implementation when it enters into force. This requires long-term political commitment to developing and sustaining country capacity, and to identifying and appropriating the resources needed for comprehensive tobacco control.



Response



Ensuring the sustainability of tobacco control programmes remains a major challenge for many countries, and must be given priority. The tobacco industry provides much of the opposition. Attempts by the tobacco industry to oppose or circumvent national and regional tobacco control efforts may escalate as the entry into force of the Convention nears. Therefore, to safeguard the Convention and strengthen national tobacco control efforts strategic collaboration is needed with other health programmes, development and poverty alleviation initiatives, as well as with diverse sectors within governments, related international agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

Exploring means to finance national activities intended to achieve the objective of the Convention should be actively pursued, such as through tobacco taxes, the creation of a special fund, or other appropriate mechanisms, in accordance with national plans, priorities and programmes. In addition, all relevant potential and existing resources, financial, technical, or otherwise, both public and private that are available for tobacco control activities, should be mobilized and utilized for the benefit of all Parties to the Convention, especially developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

Member States need to coordinate their efforts to address those aspects of the tobacco epidemic that transcend national borders. A major issue involves trade liberalization as it applies to tobacco products. Other transnational issues include cross-country illicit trade in tobacco products, global marketing and advertising. Developing subregional and regional mechanisms to effectively deal with these transnational issues is addressed by this plan of action.



Response

Tracking efforts to curb the tobacco epidemic must be done systematically at both the national and regional levels. Standard surveillance instruments and methods are needed to enable Member States to monitor progress in achieving real and measurable health impacts. Finally, a regional strategy to guide research and the generation of evidence to support policy and programme development is necessary throughout the entire process of tobacco control capacity building. This should be accompanied by a coordinated mechanism for evaluation, advocacy and information dissemination to the relevant audiences, enabling all Member States to gain access to critical data and facilitating information exchange within the Region.



Goal

The goal of this action plan is to significantly reduce the burden of disease and death caused by tobacco, through a substantial reduction in the prevalence of tobacco use, exposure to tobacco smoke and disparities related to tobacco use and its effects.