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B. STRATEGY AND PLAN OF ACTION TO STRENGTHEN TOBACCO CONTROL IN THE REGION OF THE AMERICAS 2018-2022: MID-TERM REVIEW

Background

1. Tobacco use remains a major public health problem and is the main preventable risk factor for the four main groups of noncommunicable diseases (NCDs). In the Region of the Americas, mortality from tobacco use is responsible for 16% of deaths from cardiovascular disease, 25% from cancer, 52% from chronic respiratory diseases, and 11% from diabetes (1). The tobacco epidemic is entirely preventable and can be reversed by implementing the measures contained in the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), ratified by 30 of the 35 Member States of the Region (2, 3). Despite the global consensus to address the tobacco epidemic through the FCTC, implementation of the Convention has not been uniform and has slowed down during the period 2010-2015. In September 2017, the 29th Pan American Sanitary Conference, organized by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), approved the Strategy and Plan of Action to Strengthen Tobacco Control in the Region of the Americas 2018-2022 (document CSP29/11) to accelerate implementation of the FCTC in the Region (4). This document provides a midterm review of progress made on the implementation of the Strategy and Plan of Action, taking into account the provisions contained in Resolution CD50.R6: Strengthening the Capacity of Member States to Implement the Provisions and Guidelines of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (2010) (5).

Analysis of Progress Achieved

2. Some degree of progress has been observed in the four strategic lines of action. The primary sources of information used to assess progress are national laws and other legal documents compiled in the WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic, which has been published biennially since 2007 (6). The following is a summary of progress made as of December 2019 regarding each strategic line of action, objective, and indicator.

Strategic line of action 1: Implementation of measures for the creation of completely smoke-free environments and the adoption of effective measures on the packaging and labeling of tobacco products

3. Regarding strategic line of action 1, two countries passed legislation creating smoke-free environments in all enclosed public areas and workplaces, and on public transportation. Five other countries approved regulations establishing the mandatory inclusion of large, visually striking health warnings on all tobacco packaging. Despite this progress, and although this measure falls entirely under the jurisdiction of health authorities, the tobacco industry is expected to continue its strong opposition, aiming to prevent more countries from meeting this target. Accordingly, the Pan American Sanitary Bureau (the Bureau) has successfully mobilized significant additional technical and financial resources from organizations such as the International Union against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease, Campaign for Tobacco-Free Kids, and the FCTC Secretariat.

Objective 1.1: Enact smoke-free environment legislation throughout the Region of the Americas	
Indicator, baseline, and target	Status
<p>1.1.1 Number of countries with national regulations creating 100% smoke-free environments in all enclosed public and work spaces and public transportation</p> <p>Baseline (2016): 18 Target (2022): 35</p>	<p>Three countries have joined the 18 baseline countries for a total of 21.</p> <p>Four countries have been working towards adopting regulations consistent with this target. The target is not expected to be reached; however, 80% of the target is expected to be achieved.</p>
Objective 1.2: Include health warnings on the packaging of tobacco products	
Indicator, baseline, and target	Status
<p>1.2.1 Number of countries with graphic health warnings on tobacco packaging that meet the criteria of the WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic</p> <p>Baseline (2016):16 Target (2022): 35</p>	<p>Five countries have joined the 16 baseline countries for a total of 21.</p> <p>Three countries have initiated processes to achieve this target. The target is not expected to be reached; however, 80% of the target is expected to be achieved.</p>
<p>1.2.2 Number of countries adopting a policy of neutral and/or standardized packaging</p> <p>Baseline (2016): 1 Target (2022): 6</p>	<p>One country has joined the baseline country for a total of two.</p> <p>Four countries have been making efforts to pass legislation establishing neutral packaging for tobacco products. However, due to strong opposition, based mainly on unfounded commercial claims, 50% of the target is expected to be achieved.</p>

Strategic line of action 2: Implementation of a ban on the advertising, promotion, and sponsorship of tobacco products and the adoption of measures to reduce their availability

4. Regarding strategic line of action 2, three new countries passed regulations that completely ban all forms of tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship. In two of these countries, this ban also prohibits displaying tobacco products at points of sale. Three countries adopted measures that increased the tax burden on tobacco products: two countries reached a tax burden greater than 75% of the retail price. The two measures included in this Strategic Line of Action have been the ones most opposed by the tobacco industry since the FCTC came into effect in 2005. The Bureau, in partnership with research centers and international organizations, has promoted the generation and dissemination of evidence to counter the tobacco industry's opposition to tobacco taxes; for example, through independent evaluation of the size of the illicit tobacco trade, which has been shown to be significantly smaller than what the tobacco industry claimed, and through coordination of a network of governmental and non-governmental professionals involved in tobacco tax policy.

Objective 2.1: Impose a total ban on the advertising, promotion, and sponsorship of tobacco products	
Indicator, baseline, and target	Status
<p>2.1.1 Number of countries with a total ban on the advertising, promotion, and sponsorship of tobacco products</p> <p>Baseline (2016): 5 Target (2022): 20</p>	<p>Three countries have joined the baseline countries for a total of eight.</p> <p>Four countries have initiated processes to achieve this target. Additionally, the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) continues to analyze standards, within the scope of the CARICOM Regional Organisation for Standards and Quality (CROSQ), on the prohibition of tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship in the Caribbean. The target is not expected to be reached; however, 60% of the target is expected to be achieved.</p>
<p>2.1.2 Number of countries whose ban on the advertising, promotion, and sponsorship of tobacco products includes a ban on the display of these products at the point of sale</p> <p>Baseline (2016): 4 Target (2022): 19</p>	<p>Two countries have joined the baseline countries for a total of six.</p> <p>Three countries have initiated processes to achieve this target. The target is not expected to be reached; however, 60% of the target is expected to be achieved.</p>

Objective 2.2: Reduce the availability of tobacco products by increasing excise taxes on tobacco	
Indicator, baseline, and target	Status
<p>2.2.1 Number of countries in which total taxes represent 75% or more of the final retail price, or in which the increase has been substantial enough to promote a change of category in the classification</p> <p>Baseline (2016): 2 Target (2022): 10</p>	<p>Three countries have joined the baseline countries for a total of five.</p> <p>The target is not expected to be reached, however; 80% of the target is expected to be achieved.</p>
<p>2.2.2 Number of countries that increase excise taxes on tobacco in a way that promotes an increase in the affordability index presented in the WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic 2015*</p> <p>Baseline (2016): 0 Target (2022): 20</p>	<p>11 countries.</p> <p>The target is expected to be met, as several countries are working on designing their tobacco tax policies, including health targets, and are seeking to make tobacco less affordable.</p>

(*) Percentage of per capita GDP needed to purchase 100 packs of the country's most popular brand of cigarettes.

Strategic line of action 3: Ratification of the FCTC and the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products by Member States that have not yet done so

5. Regarding strategic line of action 3, no progress has been made on ratifying the FCTC. However, the Protocol on the Elimination of Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products was ratified by two more countries. The Bureau has acted at the national and regional level to promote the ratification and implementation of this Protocol, with the support from the FCTC Secretariat.

Objective 3.1: Achieve ratification of the FCTC	
Indicator, baseline, and target	Status
<p>3.1.1 Number of countries that are States Parties to the FCTC</p> <p>Baseline (2016): 30 Target (2022): 33</p>	<p>No additional countries have joined the baseline countries. The total remains at 30.</p> <p>There has been no progress during the period and the target is not expected to be reached.</p> <p>In the five countries that are not yet States Parties to the FCTC, there has been no political will to initiate the ratification process. In two of the five countries, there were some measures to promote ratification. These measures were unsuccessful.</p>

Objective 3.2: Achieve ratification of the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products	
Indicator, baseline, and target	Status
3.2.1 Number of States Parties to the FCTC that are also States Parties to the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products Baseline (2016): 4 Target (2022): 20	Two countries have joined the baseline countries for a total of six. The target is not expected to be reached, as few countries have the ratification of this Protocol on their executive and legislative agendas.

Strategic line of action 4: Strengthening Member States' capacity in terms of public health policies to counter attempts at interference by the tobacco industry and those who work to further its interests

6. Regarding strategic line of action 4, the Bureau has been supporting actions to implement measures to protect the design and implementation of tobacco control policies from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry and those who work to further its interests. With support from the Bloomberg Initiative and the FCTC Secretariat, technical cooperation has been provided and subregional activities carried out in conjunction with the Global Center for Good Governance in Tobacco Control in Thailand and the Center for International Cooperation on Tobacco Control in Uruguay. The Bureau, with support from specialists on the subject, prepared questions related to this objective, which will be included in the questionnaire accompanying the next WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic.¹ In addition, the Bureau has received support from The O'Neill Institute for National and Global Health Law (a WHO Collaborating Center) at Georgetown University to review ethics codes and similar standards for public officials.

Objective 4.1: Establish effective mechanisms to prevent interference by the tobacco industry or those who work to further its interests	
Indicator, baseline, and target	Status
4.1.1 Number of countries that have mechanisms in place for the identification and management of conflicts of interest for government officials and employees with responsibility for tobacco control policies Baseline (2016): Unavailable Target (2020): 20	Number of countries: Still unavailable Several countries have been making efforts to implement conflict of interest management mechanisms for government officials. However, there is no standardized information available to report on progress, as there is no global indicator on this issue. To fill this gap, the Bureau has developed an instrument to collect comparable information from PAHO Member States on the subject. This information will be collected during 2020 as part of the upcoming WHO Report on the Global Tobacco Epidemic, to be published in 2021.

¹ The information collection process for the next report began in April 2020.

7. The progress made so far shows that intersectoral work at the governmental level, alongside the work of PAHO and academic and civil society institutions, is crucial to obtaining evidence that will counter opposition from the tobacco industry."

Action Necessary to Improve the Situation

8. Member States should consider the following measures that would help improve the situation:

- a) Review achievements and challenges in each strategic line of action presented in this document to accelerate the implementation of the FCTC (or, if not a State Party, of the measures contained therein) in their respective countries.
- b) Strengthen commitment at the national level to adopt regulations establishing 100% smoke-free environments in all public places and enclosed workplaces, and placing large, visually-striking health warnings on tobacco packaging, considering that, by and large, these measures fall exclusively under the jurisdiction of health authorities.
- c) Continue to strengthen measures protecting tobacco control policies from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry, and those who protect their interests. To this end, we call upon other government sectors to join and draw on the experience already available to Member States of the Region.
- d) Promote or strengthen coherent tax and health policies relating to tobacco products, by strengthening national alliances with tax authorities and promoting assistance from international, governmental, and non-governmental institutions.
- e) Keep up with the tobacco industry's new strategies and tactics—from product design to systematic and aggressive campaigns—that attract young people to use tobacco or nicotine products. Develop necessary measures in accordance with Resolution CD50.R6 (5). Strengthen monitoring of the use of these tobacco products and their effects.
- f) Share experiences between countries through active participation in the Conferences of the Parties to the FCTC, the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products, and inter-session meetings, each according to its status as a State Party or Observer to each of these treaties.

Action by the Directing Council

9. Considering the extraordinary and unprecedented circumstances presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, and in accordance with Resolution CE166.R7, this report will be published for information purposes only, and will not be discussed by the Directing Council.

References

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6. World Health Organization. WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic, 2019 [consulted on 2020 Feb 6]. The report can be found at the following link: https://www.who.int/tobacco/global_report/en/. Previous reports can be found at this link: https://www.who.int/tobacco/global_report/previous/en/

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