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**Statement of the Secretariat of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control at the United Nations Human Rights Council Third Intersessional Meeting for Dialogue and Cooperation on Human Rights and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development on “Building Back Better: Integrating Human Rights in Sustainable and Resilient Recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic”, 14 January 2021**

The Secretariat of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) is honoured to contribute to this meeting.

With 182 Parties, the WHO FCTC reaffirms the right of all people to the highest standard of health. Its objective is the protection of current and future generations from the devastating health, social, environmental and economic consequences of tobacco.<sup>1</sup>

Recalling international human rights treaties, the WHO FCTC puts an emphasis on the protection of women, children, and indigenous and economically vulnerable groups, all of them targeted by the tobacco industry. Tobacco is a leading cause of health inequalities within and among countries. Over 80% of the world's 1.3 billion tobacco users live in low- and middle-income countries, an inequality exploited and perpetuated by the tobacco industry.

The core obligations of the WHO FCTC treaty are price and tax measures; protection from exposure to tobacco smoke; health warnings on tobacco packages; a ban on tobacco advertisement, promotion and sponsorship; treatment of nicotine dependence; and a ban of sales to and by minors. Each obligation underpins the right to health and the right to life.

The WHO FCTC is included in Target 3.a of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the implementation of the treaty contributes to the wider range of SDGs, including SDG 10 and 16.<sup>2</sup> The Conference of the Parties to the WHO FCTC has adopted the *Global Strategy to Accelerate Tobacco Control*<sup>3</sup> in order to advance sustainable development through implementation of the Convention.

Tobacco is a risk factor for noncommunicable diseases, and people living with these diseases are at higher risk during the COVID-19 pandemic, with smokers who have been infected generally having worse outcomes than non-smokers.

The pandemic calls for solidarity, but now more than ever we must remain vigilant about tobacco industry attempts to portray itself as a partner, keeping in mind the industry's fundamental conflict of interest with public health.

Finally, during a time of exceptional health and financial strains, implementation of the WHO FCTC will not only protect people's health but will also provide revenue that can be devoted to solving pressing needs.

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<sup>1</sup> WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control <https://www.who.int/fctc/cop/about/en/>

<sup>2</sup> Secretariat of the WHO FCTC and United Nations Development Programme joint publication <https://www.who.int/fctc/implementation/publications/who-fctc-accelerator-for-sustainable-development/en/>

<sup>3</sup> FCTC/COP8(16) [https://www.who.int/fctc/cop/sessions/cop8/FCTC\\_COP8\(16\).pdf?ua=1](https://www.who.int/fctc/cop/sessions/cop8/FCTC_COP8(16).pdf?ua=1) and <https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/325887/WHO-CSF-2019.1-eng.pdf?ua=1>