

## **Written statement- the 2030 Agenda in the context of COVID-19 recovery**

Continuing human rights issues stemming from the actions of the tobacco industry are a barrier to the 2030 development agenda, and exacerbate the COVID-19 pandemic. Implementing the best practices set out in the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) will help states achieve development goals and save lives.

Tobacco remains the leading cause of global preventable death, illness and impoverishment, killing more than 8 million people every year. Left unchecked, tobacco will kill 1 billion people this century. During the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, addressing tobacco use is even more important, as tobacco negatively impacts the outcomes for COVID-19 patients that smoke or are exposed to tobacco smoke. Furthermore, the tobacco pandemic, even at the best of times, imposes a tremendous burden on national health systems. Tobacco is a barrier to development. Tobacco use costs the global economy up to two percent of its GDP. On the other hand, as the United Nations Development Program notes, the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control is an accelerator for Sustainable Development and reducing tobacco use is critical to achieving every goal in the SDGs. The FCTC itself is included in the SDG's, under target 3.a.

Tobacco is not only expensive to the global economy, but to individuals as well. As an example, the poorest households in Bangladesh spend almost 10 times as much on tobacco as on education. And at country level, over 10.5 million currently malnourished people could have an adequate diet if money spent on tobacco were spent on food instead.

Unfortunately, it's the poorest who tend to smoke the most. Globally, 84% of smokers live in developing and transitional economy countries. Tobacco companies also target consumers based on race. For example, in the United States, due to menthol cigarette advertising that has been targeted at the Black community for decades, nearly 9 out of 10 black people that smoke, smoke menthol cigarettes<sup>1</sup>.

Tobacco companies also target consumers based on gender, and specifically target women in countries where gender equality is becoming the norm. For example, in 2010, in its concluding observations, the Committee on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) expressed concern about the negative impacts of tobacco on the women of Argentina, particularly about tobacco advertising directed at women. The committee went on to urge Argentina to ratify and implement the FCTC.<sup>2</sup>

Tobacco exacerbates inequalities, perpetuates poverty, and is a barrier to achieving development as well as a barrier to achieving the right to health. It is essential that we consider tobacco policy through these human rights lenses. Accelerating the implementation of the WHO FCTC will not only help States advance towards SDG goals and targets, but some of its articles, such as using price and tax measures to decrease smoking prevalence, will also help States generate much needed revenues during this global pandemic.

Sincerely,

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<sup>1</sup> <https://truthinitiative.org/research-resources/targeted-communities/tobacco-use-african-american-community>

<sup>2</sup> Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women(2010), 'Concluding Observations for Argentina, Section 39', available at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/cedaw/cedaws46.htm>

Action on Smoking and Health (ASH),  
Airspace Action on Smoking and Health,  
Alliance contre le tabac,  
ASH Finland,  
Austrian Council on Smoking and Health,  
Comité National Contre le Tabagisme,  
Corporate Accountability International,  
European Network for Smoking Prevention (ENSP),  
Fundación Anáas,  
Fundación Ellen Riegner de Casas,  
Health Funds for a Smokefree Netherlands,  
Healis Sekhsaria Institute of Public Health,  
HRIDAY,  
Indraprastha Public Affairs Centre,  
Nationale Committe for Tobacco Control of Ministri for Health,  
"Pratyasha" anti-drug's club,  
Progresivni razvoj organizacija i individua (PROI),  
The Public Health Law Center,  
SERAC-Bangladesh,  
Slovenian Coalition for Public Health, Environment and Tobacco Control,  
Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance (SEATCA),  
STOP: A Global Tobacco Industry Watchdog,  
Swiss Association for Smoking Prevention

