



**REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE WESTERN PACIFIC
BUREAU REGIONAL DU PACIFIQUE OCCIDENTAL**

REGIONAL COMMITTEE

WPR/RC60/NGO/10

**Sixtieth session
Manila, Philippines
21-25 September 2009**

23 September 2009

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Agenda item 12

STATEMENT BY THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ALLIANCE

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The Framework Convention Alliance (FCA) is an international NGO with over 350 members in more than 100 countries working to support effective implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC).

Because tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death, disease, and disability in the world today, claiming 5.4 million lives globally, more than HIV.AIDs, TB and malaria combined, Dr Margaret Chan last year said, "Reversing this entirely preventable epidemic must now rank as a top priority for public health and for political leaders in every country of the world."

This is of particular importance for the Western Pacific Region, which is home to one-third of the world's smokers and, more than in any other WHO region, has among the highest rates of male smoking prevalence and the fastest increase of tobacco use uptake by women and young people.

Although all countries in the region can take pride in the fact that the Western Pacific is the only WHO region that has achieved 100% WHO FCTC ratification, the challenge now is for all parties to effectively implement the various treaty provisions.

Since the FCTC came into force in 2005, many countries still lack well-coordinated national action plans and the resources necessary to develop and implement such plans. In addition, the tobacco industry has worked doubly hard to obstruct, prevent, and circumvent effective FCTC implementation by opposing tobacco tax increases, public smoking bans, graphic health warnings, and bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship.

The proposed regional action plan for TFI, though ambitious, addresses these challenges. It calls on Member States to develop and strengthen national coordinating mechanisms and national action plans, sets specific targets and indicators for both countries and WHO, and highlights the need to protect public health policy processes from tobacco industry influence and interference.

Believing that it will help Member States effectively implement evidence-based tobacco control measures as outlined in the FCTC, FCA therefore recommends that the Regional Committee adopt the regional action plan as proposed, as well as mobilize and allocate sufficient resources so that the regional action plan is properly implemented.