



Celebrating 5 years of the WHO FCTC, looking 5 years ahead

Today we mark the 5th anniversary of the entry into force of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. As with all anniversaries, today provides an opportunity both to reflect on and celebrate past successes and to look ahead to what we hope the future will hold.

The FCTC is a remarkable achievement. It is the first treaty negotiated through the auspices of the WHO, a resounding recognition that international law has a critical role to play in global health. It already has 168 Parties. It has catalysed action across the globe, elevating the importance of tobacco control as a global health and political issue, stimulating policy change at the domestic level and bringing new public and private resources into the field.

The FCTC Conference of the Parties has adopted strong guidelines on four of the Convention's key substantive articles, and work is underway on the development of a number of other guidelines and a protocol.

But for each FCTC success, there is an equally difficult ongoing challenge. The available resources – both financial and human – are not sufficient for the magnitude of the task. The relationship between tobacco control and social and economic development is not widely enough understood. The tobacco industry continues to exercise its political and financial power to undermine the FCTC's effectiveness.

More than one hundred Parties have submitted their 2-year implementation reports and the first 5-year implementation reports are due to be submitted today. But, while information on implementation is being submitted, the COP is giving insufficient consideration to these reports, to examining them in detail and to learning what is really happening on the ground and the lessons that can be drawn from Parties' experiences.

While we have no hesitation in describing the first five years of the FCTC's life as a success, over the next five years, it is time to see the FCTC mature into a treaty that can stand side-by-side with its counterparts in other fields, such as the environment and human rights.

A critical aspect of this maturity must be a robust system of implementation review. Such systems are now routine across diverse areas of international law. They provide a process for real monitoring of whether Parties are living up to their commitments, but even more importantly, they allow for focused discussion of successes, challenges and obstacles, the learning of lessons and the making of recommendations to enhance the treaty's effectiveness. Without this kind of oversight, and cycles of learning, priority-setting and action, treaties tend to lose their way and fail to live up to their promise.

By the time we arrive at the FCTC's 10th anniversary, in February 2015, it must have a well-developed system of implementation review in place. At the centre of this system should be a standing committee elected by the FCTC COP, with a

mandate to review and report on Parties' implementation reports, draw lessons from Parties' experiences and make recommendations for action to the COP. There are ample examples from other treaties to draw upon. If the FCTC is to reach maturity by its 10th anniversary, the discussion of such a system must be commenced at the upcoming session of the COP in November this year (COP-4), substantial inter-sessional work must be carried out between COP-4 and COP-5, likely to be held in 2012, and decisions must be ready to be taken at COP-5.

Alongside this, FCTC Parties must prioritise tobacco control for funding and commit the necessary human and financial resources to tackling the tobacco epidemic in their countries. Donors need to recognise that existing funding mechanisms are not always the most appropriate instruments to deliver effective tobacco control and that much more attention must be paid to funding for non communicable disease prevention programmes.

As representatives of civil society, committed to tobacco control and global health, we look forward to engaging in these processes, and to celebrating the FCTC's 10th anniversary in 2015, reflecting on another five years of even greater success, and looking at a mature treaty living up to its promise of protecting present and future generations from the devastating health, social, environmental and economic consequences of tobacco.

International Union Against Cancer

<http://www.uicc.org/>

Framework Convention Alliance

<http://www.fctc.org/>

International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease

<http://www.theunion.org/>

World Heart Federation

<http://www.worldheart.org/>