



FCTC

## WHF President's letter to members

Presidents National Cardiology Societies  
Presidents/Chairs Heart Foundations

May 12, 2003

Dear colleagues,

Tobacco use is the leading cause of preventable death, disease and disability in the world today. If current trends continue, 10 million people will die annually by the year 2030. Action must be taken immediately, otherwise tobacco will soon become the leading cause of death worldwide.

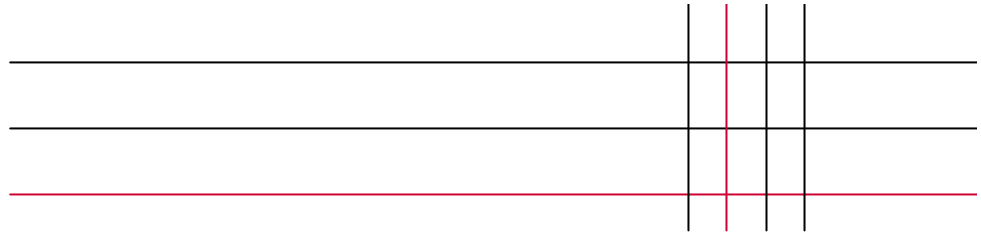
After four years of intense negotiations, "The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control" (FCTC), a legally binding international treaty that will establish general guidelines and principles for international governance in the area of tobacco control is on the verge of being finalized. The FCTC will be the world's first global agreement devoted entirely to tobacco control – it truly represents an historic opportunity for countries across the world to take significant steps to control the tobacco epidemic.

The World Heart Federation along with a number of other health and anti-tobacco NGOs across the world have worked diligently to ensure a strong and effective FCTC. In our view, this text provides an excellent basis upon which comprehensive tobacco control policies can be built across the world. This text also provides an opportunity and encourages the Parties to pursue stronger measures than that provided in the treaty. For further information about the content of the treaty, please find attached a summary produced by the Framework Convention Alliance (an international NGO coalition of which the WHF is a member). As well, feel free to consult the World Heart Federation website for additional information, at <http://www.worldheart.org/advocacy/tobacco>.

Although we are pleased with the positive measures contained in the treaty, the reality is that the treaty is facing a potentially significant threat, which could be realized during the third week of May, 2003, at the meeting of the World Health Assembly in Geneva. We had expected that the FCTC would be adopted at this meeting by the member states of the World Health Assembly. However, we have learned that the United States, along with a handful of other countries, is planning to request that the treaty be reopened for discussion and negotiation at this meeting. Specifically, the US would like the treaty to be amended so that potential signatories to the treaty could have the option of opting out of specific clauses. This could have disastrous consequences on the treaty - weakening it significantly and delaying the treaty approval process. NGOs across the world are seriously concerned.

We would appreciate it if you could encourage your membership to meet with or write your Minister of Health and/or the government officials who participated in the FCTC negotiations on





behalf of your country, to request that they adopt the treaty at the World Health Assembly Meetings in Geneva later this month, without any amendments. Please find attached a copy of a draft letter that you could personalize when writing to your Minister of Health and/or other officials.

Your assistance will prove invaluable to the public health of your fellow countrymen and the world community.

Sincerely,

Professor Phillip Poole-Wilson  
President  
World Heart Federation

