



# Model letter to members for Ministers of Health of other relevant government official

Dear Minister or Government Official,

We are writing to you a little less than three weeks before the World Health Assembly in Geneva (19-28 May) is expected to formally adopt the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). We believe that the FCTC contains the basis for the global response that will be able to curb the tobacco epidemic that, if unchecked, could kill one billion people this century.

However, as you may know, a small number of countries are seeking to weaken the treaty by attempting to reopen the negotiations and delete the “no reservations” clause. We are writing to urge you to oppose this effort, and instead use the opportunity granted by the World Health Assembly to send a powerful signal to the world and to the tobacco industry that the protection of public health is paramount.

It would be extremely inappropriate for this contentious issue to be reopened after it has been fully debated and settled by the negotiating parties over the course of nearly 3 and half years of negotiations.

It is also an extremely risky proposition. Reopening the treaty, and doing so on a major issue such as the “no reservations” clause, could trigger a debate that could not be resolved at the WHA. It also could lead other nations to request reconsideration of other issues that they feel strongly about. This could jeopardize the entire treaty – setting the FCTC process back many years.

Moreover, allowing reservations would prove extremely harmful to the efficacy of the treaty. Allowing reservations undermines the obligations included in the FCTC and makes the treaty, in effect, a policy menu. The tobacco industry will work hard to convince nations that it is easier to “reserve” than to improve tobacco control policies. Health groups will need to counter the industry on a country-by-country basis.

Accordingly, we would like to request that you use your vote at the World Health Assembly to oppose any effort to reopen the negotiations.

We are keen to hear from you about your government’s position on this critical issue.

Yours sincerely,

YOUR NAME

President National Cardiology Society and/or President/Chair Heart Foundation