



WHO FCTC: Now International law!

On Sunday 27th February, the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), the international tobacco treaty negotiated under the auspices of the World Health Organization, became international law. It provides the basic tools for countries to enact comprehensive tobacco control legislation and take on the powerful tobacco industry.

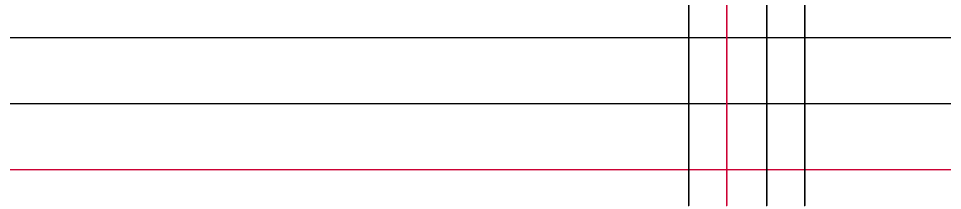
The WHO FCTC was unanimously adopted by the 56th World Health Assembly in May 2003. The WHO FCTC closed for signature on 29 June 2004 with 168 signatories (including the European Community). The first 40 Contracting Parties to the WHO FCTC were Armenia, Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Canada, Cook Islands, Fiji, France, Ghana, Hungary, Iceland, India, Japan, Jordan, Kenya, Madagascar, Maldives, Malta, Mauritius, Mexico, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nauru, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, Palau, Panama, Qatar, San Marino, Seychelles, Singapore, Slovakia, Solomon Islands, Sri Lanka, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay.

Since 30 November 2004, the following have also deposited the instrument of ratification or equivalent: Botswana, Denmark, Finland, Germany, Honduras, Latvia, Lesotho, Lithuania, Marshall Islands, Netherlands, Peru, Senegal, Spain, Timor-Leste, Turkey, United Kingdom and Viet Nam.

The WHO FCTC has provisions that set international standards on tobacco price and tax increases, tobacco advertising and sponsorship, labelling, illicit trade and second-hand smoke among others.

The Treaty continues from now on to be open for ratification, acceptance or approval for those countries that have signed, and is open for accession for those that have not. There is no deadline for countries to become Contracting Parties to the WHO FCTC.

The Conference of the Parties (COP) will be the governing body of the Convention that will decide on technical, procedural and financial matters relating to the implementation of the Treaty. Countries that deposit the instrument of ratification or equivalent before November 2005 will be voting Contracting Parties during the first COP, which is scheduled to take place in February 2006



The World Heart Federation congratulates all the countries who ratified the treaty and looks forward to working through its national members with their government to ensure that the treaty is fully implemented.

The entry into force of the FCTC marks a historic moment for global public health. This groundbreaking, legally binding treaty gives countries basic tools to protect the health of their citizens from the tobacco industry's deceptions and slick marketing. It requires ratifying nations to adopt policies proven to reduce smoking and save lives such as: a comprehensive ban on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, and large, graphic health warning labels that cover at least 30 percent of cigarette packs. The treaty also provides nations with a roadmap for enacting strong, science-based policies in other areas, including protection from secondhand smoke, increased tobacco taxation, and measures to combat cigarette smuggling.

Globally, The World Health Organization estimates that approximately five million people die each year from tobacco use. If current trends continue, this figure will reach 10 million per year by 2030, with 70 percent of those deaths occurring in developing countries. While the measures in the FCTC represent a minimum set of tobacco control policies, the treaty explicitly encourages countries to go above and beyond these measures. Strong action on the part of countries will give them the opportunity to reduce the human suffering caused by tobacco and curb runaway costs of tobacco-related health care.

