

**Embargoed until: 00:01 (CET), 31 May, 2010**

## **Female smokers increasing as tobacco industry targets women**

*World Heart Federation calls for action to ensure that women are protected from the dangers of tobacco*

**Geneva, 31 May 2010** – To mark World No Tobacco Day, the World Heart Federation urges all women to avoid secondhand smoke and take action to support the comprehensive smoking bans that protect them from the dangers of tobacco. The World Heart Federation also urges policymakers to ensure that tobacco control policy offers equal protection to men and women.

This year, World No Tobacco Day, a global campaign organized by the World Health Organization, highlights how tobacco marketing targets women. Currently one in five smokers is a woman, but this is changing fast.<sup>1</sup> While men's smoking rates are declining around the world, in many countries increasing numbers of women are starting to smoke, which poses a growing threat to women's' health,<sup>2</sup> especially in the low-income countries that can least afford to cope with the consequences.

“Smoking and exposure to secondhand smoke are important causes of heart disease and they also have the greatest impact among low-income populations,” explains World Heart Federation Vice-President Dr. Lyn Roberts, “Cardiovascular disease is the number one killer of women in the world, and 80% of the people it kills live in developing and middle income countries.”

This year, the World Congress of Cardiology, to be held in Beijing on 16-19 June, will also host the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Conference on Women and Heart Disease and Stroke. The World Heart Federation has been working in partnership with the International Network of Women Against Tobacco (INWAT) who are holding two sessions during the conference to explore measures to protect women from the harmful effects of tobacco.

“Tobacco use and exposure to tobacco smoke is deadly for both men and women – but women are particularly at risk,” said World Heart Federation Vice-President Dr. Lyn Roberts. “Physically, the effects of tobacco on a woman's reproductive system can be dangerous and complicated, but there is a lot more to it than the physical: women are also exposed to different social, cultural and economic pressures, which influences how they start smoking, the barriers they face in quitting, and how much they can control their exposure to secondhand smoke.”

The World Heart Federation is committed to improving women's lives by improving their heart health via activities such as the Go Red for Women campaign. The campaign calls upon every woman in the world to take care of her heart health by raising awareness of the common risk factors, signs and symptoms of heart disease and stroke. By empowering women and encouraging them to support tobacco control, women can take the first steps towards taking control of their heart health.

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## **Notes to Editor**

### **World No Tobacco Day**

The World Heart Federation supports World No Tobacco Day, organized on 31 May by the World Health Organization. The 2010 theme is "Gender and tobacco with an emphasis on marketing to women". <http://www.world-heart-federation.org/what-we-do/tobacco-control/>

### **World Heart Federation**

The World Heart Federation is dedicated to leading the global fight against heart disease and stroke with a focus on low- and middle-income countries via a united community of more than 200 member organizations. With its members, the World Heart Federation works to build global commitment to addressing cardiovascular health at the policy level, generates and exchanges ideas, shares best practice, advances scientific knowledge and promotes knowledge transfer to tackle cardiovascular disease – the world's number one killer. It is a growing membership organization that brings together the strength of medical societies and heart foundations from more than 100 countries. Through our collective efforts we can help people all over the world to lead longer and better heart-healthy lives. [www.worldheart.org](http://www.worldheart.org)

### **International Network of Women Against Tobacco (INWAT)**

The International Network of Women Against Tobacco (INWAT) is a network of over 1800 members in 100 different countries working toward the elimination of tobacco use and exposure among women. INWAT was founded in 1990 by women tobacco control leaders to address the complex issues of tobacco use among women and young girls. [www.inwat.org](http://www.inwat.org)

### **World Congress of Cardiology**

The World Congress of Cardiology Scientific Sessions is the official congress of the World Heart Federation and is held every two years. Through the World Congress of Cardiology, the World Heart Federation offers an international stage for the latest developments in science and public outreach in the field of cardiovascular health. The World Congress of Cardiology places emphasis on the complementary nature of science and public outreach and strives to spread the message that through individual, community and patient care interventions, the growing epidemic of cardiovascular disease in developing countries can be prevented.

The next World Congress of Cardiology Scientific Session will take place in Beijing, China in June 2010.

<http://www.world-heart-federation.org/congress-and-events/world-congress-of-cardiology-scientific-sessions-2010/>

## **Go Red For Women**

Go Red for Women is a major international awareness campaign dedicated to the prevention, diagnosis and control of cardiovascular disease in women. The American Heart Association created the Go Red for Women campaign in 2004 to empower women with the knowledge and tools to take charge of their heart health. The World Heart Federation, together with its members, has taken the campaign global to inform women worldwide that heart disease and stroke is their number one killer and that they can take appropriate action to prevent it. Go Red for Women is an alarm call to everywoman in the world to take care of her heart health. In short, it is not a red dress – it's a red alert!

<sup>1</sup> Greaves, L., Jateganonkar, N., & Sanchez, S. (Eds.) *Turning a New Leaf: Women, Tobacco, and the Future*. British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women's Health (BCCEWH) and International Network of Women Against Tobacco (INWAT). Vancouver: British Columbia Centre of Excellence for Women's Health; 2006, 7

<sup>2</sup> Tobacco Free Initiative. Gender and tobacco Control : a policy brief. World Health Organization, 2007, 3