

## **WORLD HEART FEDERATION URGES GENEVA TO VOTE FOR SMOKING BAN**

### **Right to clean air outweighs right to smoke**

(Geneva, date) The World Heart Federation is urging Geneva to vote on February 24<sup>th</sup> to ban smoking in bars and restaurants. Following recent smoking bans in France, Spain, Italy and the United Kingdom, it is hoped Geneva will follow the example set by fellow Swiss cantons Ticino and Soleure and put an end to smoking in public places<sup>1</sup>.

#### **Major cause of cardiac death**

Heart disease and stroke is Switzerland's number one cause of death and it is estimated that smoking increases the risk by 100 per cent, while the risk of death from undiagnosed coronary heart disease is increased by 300 per cent<sup>2</sup>. Furthermore, there is overwhelming consensus among medical and scientific authorities that passive smoking is a major cause of disease in non-smokers, including coronary heart disease and cardiac death as well as lung cancer<sup>3</sup>.

#### **No safe level**

Since 2003, when the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) was unanimously adopted by World Health Organization member states<sup>4</sup>, it has been universally acknowledged that the only way to protect the public from second-hand smoke is comprehensive smoke-free air laws.

“There is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke,” says Janet Voûte of the Geneva-based World Heart Federation. “The right of a person to breathe clean air takes precedence over any possible right of smokers to pollute the air other people breathe. This is not about whether smokers smoke, it is about where they smoke.”

### **Smoke-free air laws popular**

Smoke-free air laws have proved popular, effective and well respected all over the world. In New Zealand support for smoke-free bars, pubs and nightclubs rose from 61 per cent in 2004 to 81 per cent in 2006<sup>5</sup>. In Ireland the smoke-free law was supported by 93 per cent of the population in 2005, compared with 67 per cent immediately before the law was introduced<sup>6</sup>.

### **Reduction in heart attack hospital admissions**

In Scotland, post-implementation studies of its ban showed a 17 per cent reduction in heart attack admissions to nine major Scottish hospitals<sup>7</sup>. One study comparing air quality before and after implementation found an 86 per cent improvement in bars and a 39 per cent reduction in second-hand smoke exposure in non-smoking adults and children<sup>8</sup>.

### **Three billion people**

The FCTC became the world's first international public health treaty when it came into force on 27 February, 2005. The treaty has been signed by 168 countries and is legally binding in 152 ratifying countries representing over three billion people. Recent figures for Switzerland, which has signed but not yet ratified the treaty, show that 22 per cent of all those between 15 and 65 are regular smokers<sup>9</sup>, and for 35 to 74-year-olds in Geneva that figure rises to 25.7 per cent<sup>10</sup>.

The International Labour Organization estimates that each year about 200,000 workers die because of exposure to second-hand smoke in the workplace<sup>11</sup>. As an organization active in the awareness and prevention of cardiovascular disease, the World Heart Federation strongly supports any actions that have an impact on heart disease and stroke risk factors.

### **About the World Heart Federation**

The World Heart Federation is a nongovernmental organization based in Geneva Switzerland dedicated to the prevention and control of heart disease and stroke, with a focus on low- and middle-income countries. It is comprised of 195 member societies of cardiology and heart foundations from over 100 countries covering the regions of Asia-Pacific, Europe, East Mediterranean, the Americas and Africa. For further information visit: [www.world-heart-federation.org](http://www.world-heart-federation.org)

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<sup>1</sup>The Ticino ban began on April 12<sup>th</sup> 2007. The Soleure ban will start in 2009. Cantons Grisons and Appenzel Rhodes-Interieur have also voted for a ban on smoking in public places albeit with a possibility for restaurants to have separate smoking rooms.

<sup>2</sup> J Mackay, G Mensah, Atlas of Heart Disease and Stroke. 2004 World Health Organization. Geneva

<sup>3</sup> World Health Organization (2007). Protection from Exposure to Second-hand Tobacco Smoke. Policy Recommendations. Available online at:

[http://www.who.int/tobacco/resources/publications/wntd/2007/pol\\_recommendations/en/index.html](http://www.who.int/tobacco/resources/publications/wntd/2007/pol_recommendations/en/index.html)

<sup>4</sup> World Health Organization website: <http://www.who.int/features/2003/08/en/>

<sup>5</sup> Semple S, Creely KS, Naji A et al (2007). Secondhand smoke levels in Scottish pubs: the effect of smoke-free legislation. *Tobacco Control* 16:127-132

Waa A and McGough S (2006). Reducing exposure to second hand smoke: Changes associated with the implementation of the amended New Zealand Smoke-free Environments Act 1990: 2003-2006. Health Sponsorship Council Research and Evaluation Unit: Wellington. Available online at

[http://www.hsc.org.nz/pdfs/SFEWorkplace\\_Final.pdf](http://www.hsc.org.nz/pdfs/SFEWorkplace_Final.pdf)

<sup>6</sup> Office for Tobacco Control (2005). Smoke-free workplaces in Ireland: A one year review. Clane, Ireland: Office for Tobacco Control. Available online at [http://www.otc.ie/Uploads/1\\_Year\\_Report\\_FA.pdf](http://www.otc.ie/Uploads/1_Year_Report_FA.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Sally Haw. *Scotland's Smokefree Legislation: Results from a comprehensive evaluation*. Presentation given at the "Towards a Smokefree Society Conference", Edinburgh Scotland, 10 – 11 September 2007. Available at: <http://www.smokefreeconference07.com/programme.php>

<sup>8</sup> Semple S, Creely KS, Naji A et al (2007). Secondhand smoke levels in Scottish pubs: the effect of smoke-free legislation. *Tobacco Control* 16:127-132

<sup>9</sup> WHO 2005

<sup>10</sup> Bus Santé 2001

<sup>11</sup> Takala J (2005). Introductory report: decent work, safe work. International Labor Organization: Geneva. Available online at <http://www.ilo.org/public/english/protection/safework/wdcongrs17/intrep.pdf>