Warn About the Dangers of Tobacco

One of Six Cost-Effective Actions Endorsed by WHO to Reduce Tobacco's Deadly Toll

Tobacco is a deadly, addictive product. The extreme addictiveness of tobacco and the full range of health dangers are not fully understood or appreciated by the public.

WHO FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON TOBACCO CONTROL (FCTC)

Article 11 of the FCTC requires parties to use large, clear health warnings that should cover 50 percent of the principle display areas. The article also requires parties to implement effective measures to ensure that tobacco product packaging and labeling do not promote a tobacco product by any means that are false, misleading, deceptive, or likely to create an erroneous impression about its characteristic, health effects, hazards, or emissions. These include terms such as "light," "low tar," and "ultra-light."

> "Every person should be informed of the health consequences, addictive nature and mortal threat posed by tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke."
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> WHO FCTC Article 4.1

KEY MESSAGES

>> Tobacco is deadly and addictive.

>> To ensure that the public is fully informed of tobacco's harms and to counter the seductive images of tobacco portrayed by the tobacco industry, it is essential to:

- Place health warnings on all tobacco product packaging. Tobacco pack warnings should be clear, include graphic pictures of tobacco's harms and cover at least half of all outer product covering.
- Launch tobacco control media campaigns and other counter advertising activities. Media campaigns must be hard hitting, sustained over significant amounts of time and effectively counter the tobacco industry's marketing and promotional tactics.

>> Terms such as "light" and "low" are misleading and deceptive. Such products do not reduce risk.

THE CASE FOR WARNING ABOUT THE DANGERS OF TOBACCO

- **Health warnings encourage tobacco users to quit and young people not to start.** In Brazil, after the introduction of new picture warnings, 73% of smokers approved of them, 54% had changed their opinion on the health consequences of smoking and 67 % said the new warnings made them want to quit.[1]
- **Health warnings on tobacco products are guaranteed to reach all users.** Pack-a-day smokers are potentially exposed to the warnings over 7,000 times per year.[2]
- **Policies mandating health warnings on tobacco packages cost governments nothing to implement.**[3] Pictorial warnings are overwhelmingly supported by the public.[4]
- **Tobacco control media campaigns reduce tobacco use.** Hard hitting, intensive media campaigns using graphic images inform the public, reduce tobacco use, and increase quit attempts and cessation rates.[5,6,7,8]

[1] Costa e Silva VL. Presentation to EU Commission on enforcement of health warnings in Brazil. Brussels 2002. [2] Hammond D, Fong GT, McDonald PW, Cameron R, Brown KS. Impact of the graphic Canadian warning labels on adult smoking behavior. Tobacco Control. 2003; 12(4):391-395. [3] Ibid. [4] WHO report on the Global Tobaccco Epidemic, 2008: The MPOWER package. Geneva: World Health Organization,2008. [5] US Department of Health and Human Services, Reducing the Health Consequences of Smoking: 25 Years of Progress. A report of the Surgeon General. Rockville, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control, Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, Office on Smoking and Health; 1989. Available from: http://www.cdc.gov/tobacco/sgr/index.htm. [6] Goldman LK, Glantz SA. Evaluation of antismoking advertising campaigns. JAMA. 1998;279:772-7. [7] Farrelly MC, Davis KC, Haviland L, Messeri P, Healton CG. Evidence of a dose-response relationship between "truth" antismoking ads and youth smoking prevalence. American Journal of Public Health. 2005;95(3):425-431.