



Let's all Choose Health, not Tobacco!

Tobacco is one of the greatest public health threats the world has ever faced and is responsible for more than 8 million deaths every year. More than 7 million of these deaths are the result of direct tobacco use, while more than 1.2 million deaths are the result of non-smokers being exposed to second-hand smoke. Every year in the African region, 300,000 people die from the consequences of smoking.

Exposure to tobacco smoke is also harmful. Almost half of all children regularly breathe air polluted by tobacco smoke in public places, and every year, 65,000 children die from diseases attributed to passive exposure to tobacco smoke. In adults, second-hand smoke is likely to cause serious cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, including coronary heart disease and lung cancer, while in babies, it can cause sudden death and in pregnant women, low birth weight.

Tobacco Burden

The tobacco threat is not only a major cause of disease, but also of poverty. Almost 80% of the more than 1.1 billion smokers worldwide live in low- and middle-income countries, where the burden of tobacco-related disease and death is the heaviest. Tobacco users who die prematurely deprive their families of income, increase the cost of health care, and negatively impact economic growth.

Looking at the devastating consequences of tobacco use, every year on May 31, the World Health Organization (WHO) and global partners celebrate World No Tobacco Day, with the aim of raising awareness among governments and the public about the health harms of smoking, as well as the preventable diseases and deaths related to tobacco use.

Protecting young generation from tobacco

This year's theme, *"Protecting Children from Tobacco Industry Interference"*, is an appeal to societies and governments to adopt policies that protect children, young people, and adolescents from the manipulative practices of the tobacco and related industries, including the relentless marketing of their dangerous products on social media.

Studies show that children and adolescents, to gain a foothold in society and satisfy the need to belong and be accepted by the group, often make the wrong choices, and therefore, when faced with the image of cigarettes as "forbidden fruit", it awakens their desire to "infringe", motivating them to smoke. In Africa, smoking among young



people aged between 13 and 15 is 11.1% for boys and 7.2% for girls, which represents around 7 million smokers. The tobacco industry, for its part, is intentionally designing products and using marketing strategies that appeal directly to children and young people, putting the health and future development of our countries at risk. The use of children's flavors, combined with attractive and colorful designs, is a clear attempt to get young people hooked on these unhealthy products.

Given the alarming increase in the use of e-cigarettes and other harmful tobacco industry products such as hookah, which are increasingly attracting young people and damaging their health, on December 14, 2023, the World Health Organization (WHO) issued an alert, emphasizing the critical need for urgent action to protect children and adolescents from the dangers of these products.

It should be noted that smoking, poor diet, harmful use of alcohol, sedentary lifestyles and pollution are the five greatest risk factors for the incidence of non-communicable diseases, which have become an increasingly heavy burden worldwide, collectively accounting for 74% of all global deaths.

In the midst of this dangerous reality for public health, why not eliminate tobacco production and consumption?

Unfortunately, there are many challenges that countries face in addressing the tobacco use. That's why the WHO calls on everyone to work together to jointly address the challenges of combating tobacco use and not to be fooled by the image-washing tactics used by the tobacco industry, which claims to be highly profitable and socially responsible, but the reality is completely different - In most tobacco-producing countries, the contribution of tobacco leaf imports and exports is tiny, estimated at less than 1% of gross domestic product.

Therefore, the tobacco industry's products and business practices, in addition to being unprofitable for governments, are destroying the environment, causing significant damage in terms of deforestation; air pollution; wasted water; littered beaches, and a high number of unknown deaths, as a consequence of the impact of smoking on the environment, and contributing to hunger and putting public health and our lives at risk.

In 2003, the World Health Assembly adopted the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), and it came into force in 2005. This international agreement, to which Angola is a signatory, establishes a set of rules and policies to reduce tobacco use and its impact on public health. Over the last few decades, its implementation has led to satisfactory results in several countries, particularly in terms of awareness, prevention, rehabilitation, monitoring and reducing the number of consumers of tobacco products.

The WHO World Report on tobacco consumption trends reveals that 22 countries in the African Region are on track to achieve a 30% reduction in tobacco use by 2025. It is possible and we must eliminate tobacco use. To this end, the WHO recommends several actions including:

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a) Banning or strictly regulating tobacco products and other nicotine products, such as e-cigarettes and hookah, to protect young people in particular; b) Adopting public health policies aimed at reducing tobacco use, including high taxes on tobacco products, advertising bans, packaging with health warnings, smoking bans in public places and cessation programs; c) Promoting and carrying out education and awareness campaigns on the risks of tobacco and encouraging smokers to quit, as well as preventing the start of smoking among young people; and d) Addressing the impact of tobacco on children as a critical public health priority, through coordinated efforts and preventive measures, significantly reducing risks and promoting a healthier future for children.

Tobacco is one of the biggest threats to public health, and we must not let it threaten the well-being of the population and the development of the country. Let's all work together to eliminate tobacco use, choose health, not tobacco!

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