



**Seizing the 2021 World No Tobacco Day to reiterate  
UN commitment towards achieving the SDGs  
“Commit to Quitting”**



## **Background**

The 26<sup>th</sup> World No Tobacco Day will be observed globally on 31<sup>st</sup> May 2021, under the theme “Commit to Quitting” followed by a year-long campaign with the same theme. As the world continues to reel under the impact of COVID-19, the fear of contracting the disease is motivating smokers to quit. Tobacco smokers have a higher risk of developing severe form of COVID-19 infection and of dying from the disease. Worldwide, around 780 million people have the motivation to quit, but only 30% of them have access to the tools that can help them to do so. This has underlined the urgent need to provide people with the tools and resources they need to make a successful attempt at quitting.

Smoking is the leading cause of preventable death and illness. It causes a range of cancers as well as heart disease, stroke and emphysema (a lung condition that causes shortness of breath). Tobacco use is not only impacting the health and wellbeing of the lives of millions of people but also poses a threat to economic and social development, including the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Every year, more than 8 million people die worldwide because of tobacco use. More than 7 million of those deaths are the result of direct tobacco use while around 1.2 million are the result of non-smokers being exposed to second-hand smoke.

## **World No Tobacco Day 2021: the role of UN agencies**

The 26<sup>th</sup> No Tobacco Day presents an excellent opportunity for United Nations (UN) agencies to join the year-long campaign and strengthen integration of tobacco control into the agencies’ main areas of work to collectively contribute towards the achievement of the SDG targets. More specifically, UN agencies can provide the tools and resources needed to support to their staff who want to quit tobacco –This will contribute to the global campaign that aims to support 100 million people quit tobacco.

The goal of the global campaign is to create an environment conducive to quitting tobacco through the implementation of the following strategies:

- advocate for strong tobacco cessation policies
- promote increased access to cessation services
- raise awareness of tobacco industry tactics
- empower tobacco users to make successful attempts to quit through “quit & win” initiatives.

In this regard, the United Nations Communications Group (UNCG) has initiated a social media campaign to mark the observance of the WNTD 2021 with the objective of raising awareness regarding the risks of

tobacco use and its impacts on health and socioeconomic wellbeing of UN staff and their dependents. Individual UN agencies are requested to provide staff and their dependents with access to tools that are proven to help people quit.

In addition, UN agencies can advocate and support measures to reduce tobacco use and exposure to tobacco smoke as outlined in the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). Today, there are 182 parties covering more than 90% of the world population. The FCTC is a legally binding treaty that requires countries (Parties) to adopt and take. The provisions in the WHO FCTC and the SDGs highlight the areas where UN agencies can intervene to reduce tobacco use, improve health, save lives and save money. These could include.



### **Micro level**

- Provision of tobacco cessation services at the UN Health Care Clinic (UN HCC), which includes counselling support, toll-free quit line, mobile and digital cessation service, nicotine replacement therapies and other tools.
- Implementation of stringent measures to create a 100% UN Smoke Free Environment through effective enforcement of the smoke free policy. (WHO FCTC, Art 14; SDG Goal 3, by all UN agencies, and UNECA)

### **Macro level**

- Advocate against the use of agricultural lands for tobacco cultivation. Draw attention to its impact on worsening food insecurity. (WHO FCTC Art 17; Goal 2, by WFP and FAO)
- Highlight the impact of tobacco use on the health of workers, including those employed in the tobacco industry and tobacco farming. Raise awareness among workers regarding the risk of tobacco use for their health and socioeconomic wellbeing, including their dependents. (WHO FCTC Art 8 and 14; SDG Goal ILO, UN agencies)
- Draw attention to issues related to economic migration as a result of tobacco use induced poverty. (WHO FCTC Art 17; SDG Goal 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere, by UNHCR)
- Underline the health risks of tobacco use and secondhand smoke exposure for expectant mothers and their newborns. (WHO FCTC Art 8; SDG Goal 3, All UN agencies, WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA)
- Reduce the environment degradation caused by the tobacco industry. Urge measures to make the tobacco industry accountable for addressing the environmental consequences of tobacco production and consumption. (WHO FCTC Art 19; SDG Goal 1, 17 -UNDP, UNFCC)
- Implement collective actions to raise awareness on the tactics used by the tobacco industry to target women, girls and youth (WHO FCTC Art 8; SDG Goal 5: Achieve equality and empower all women and girls; WHO; UN Women; UNFPA)