

TOBACCO CONTROL



WHO FCTC COP8 concludes with new strategy to accelerate tobacco control efforts



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The Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention for Tobacco Control (FCTC) closed its eighth session (COP8) after adopting a Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) outlining a new action plan to scale up the global tobacco control agenda over the next few years.

According to the Framework Convention Alliance (FCA), “the most important decision taken during the week – and FCA’s top priority headed into the COP – was arguably the adoption of the first ever strategic plan for the FCTC. Titled the Global Strategy to Accelerate Tobacco Control, this plan provides a roadmap to reach the overarching target to reduce tobacco prevalence use by 30% by 2025.

The Strategy will be an important tool to streamline work under the Convention, to raise funds to address the global funding gap for tobacco control, and to facilitate international cooperation and raise the visibility of the treaty.



In adopting the Strategy, the COP also agreed to set up a peer-led FCTC Implementation Review Mechanism (IRM) by 2020. Common under other treaties, this mechanism involves a review of the implementation reports that Parties provide to the FCTC Secretariat every two years “.

The six-day COP8 gathering brought together over 1,200 participants comprising delegations from 148 Parties to the global tobacco control treaty and included representatives of United Nations agencies, other intergovernmental organizations and civil society.



WHO Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland

COP8 also achieved significant progress on agreeing to implement mechanisms to increase the transparency of COP sessions and to reduce the ability of industry-influenced delegates to interfere in COP discussions.

For future COP sessions, each Party delegation will be required to declare that they have observed Article 5.3 its guidelines in selecting their delegation to the COP. IGO and NGO observers will be required to submit declarations of any conflict of interest in order to be accredited to attend the COP. COP8 also amended policies to encourage media access to COP discussions, and established screening procedures for media and public attendees to prevent tobacco industry representatives from infiltrating the COP through these badges.

There were a number of other decisions taken at COP8 on treaty instruments and technical matters, including:

- On novel tobacco products, where Parties re-affirmed that Heated Tobacco Products are indeed tobacco products and that, as such, are subject to regulation under the FCTC. COP8 also requested a report on these products for COP9.
- E-cigarettes were also discussed again at COP8, though much more calmly than at past COP sessions. The Secretariat has been encouraged to pursue the idea of an IARC monograph, but no formal decision was adopted.
- On Article 13 (tobacco advertising, promotion, and sponsorship), a working group will draft an addendum to the Article 13 guidelines to deal with the changing media landscape and cross-border advertising. The Secretariat will also establish an online information hub to facilitate exchange between Parties on tobacco advertising activities.

The recent entry into force on 25 September of the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade on Tobacco Products marked another key milestone in global tobacco control efforts. To date, the Protocol has 48 Parties. The first session of the Meeting of the Parties (MOP1) to the Protocol was held on 8-10 October, following the close of COP8.

Sources: WHO FCTC Press release and notes of the FCA policy team.