

World No Tobacco Day 2015: Stop illicit trade of tobacco products

31 May 2015

Every year, on 31 May, WHO and partners mark World No Tobacco Day (WNTD), highlighting the health risks associated with tobacco use and advocating for effective policies to reduce tobacco consumption.

For World No Tobacco Day 2015, we are calling on countries to work together to end the illicit trade of tobacco products.

From many angles, the illicit trade of tobacco products is a major global concern, including health, legal and economic, governance and corruption.

Scale of the problem

The illicit tobacco market may account for as much as one in every 10 cigarettes consumed globally, according to studies, including information supplied by the global customs community. The European Commission estimates that illicit trade in cigarettes costs the EU and their Member States over €10 billion annually in lost tax and customs revenue.

Illicit trade is not a problem just in high-income countries; almost all countries throughout the world are subject to illicit trade in some form or another. In response to the threat posed by illicit tobacco trade, the international community negotiated and adopted in November 2012 the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products, the first protocol to the WHO FCTC.

Goals of the WNTD 2015 campaign

- Raise awareness on the harm to people's health caused by the illicit trade in tobacco products, especially the youth and low-income groups, due to the increased accessibility and affordability of these products due to their lower costs.
- Show how health care gains and programmes, tobacco control policies, like increased tax and prices, pictorial health warnings and other measures are undermined by the illicit trade in tobacco products.
- Demonstrate how the tobacco industry has been involved in the illicit trade of tobacco products.
- Highlight how the illicit trade of tobacco products is a means of amassing great wealth for criminal groups to finance other organised crime activities, including drugs, human and arms trafficking, as well as terrorism.
- Promote the ratification of, accession to and use of the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products by all Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) and its early entry into force through the active involvement of all relevant stakeholders.

The global tobacco epidemic kills nearly 6 million people each year, of which more than 600 000 are non-smokers dying from breathing second-hand smoke. Unless we act, the epidemic will kill more than 8 million people every year by 2030. More than 80% of these preventable deaths will be among people living in low-and middle-income countries.

Key public messages

The illicit trade of tobacco products is detrimental to your health and your interests. Here is why?

1. Illicit tobacco products hook young people into tobacco experimentation and use because they are more affordable. Such illicit products also mislead young tobacco users by not displaying health warnings and sometimes involving children in illegal selling activities.
2. Illicit trade takes tax revenue away from the Government, which could have otherwise been spent on the provision of public services, instead directing such funds into the hands of criminals.
3. Illicit trade strengthens corruption and weakens good governance.
4. Tobacco companies have been known to use loopholes in tobacco control governance systems and indulge in the illicit trade of tobacco products.

Calls to action

For policy makers

- Policy makers must recognize that the illicit tobacco trade not only exacerbates the global tobacco epidemic and its related health consequences, but that it has security implications through financing organised crime, including drugs, human and arms trafficking, as well as terrorism.
- Ratification of the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products is necessary to respond to the financial, legal and health impacts of the illicit trade of tobacco products.

For the public

- Members of the public should recognize the adverse health, economic and social impacts of the illicit trade of tobacco products, including the linkages with human trafficking and organized drug crimes.
- Members of the public can join the WNTD awareness-raising campaign, including through social media, to amplify messages and advice that governments and WHO will be issuing to curb the illicit trade of tobacco products.

For academia

- Academic institutions can undertake additional research on the subject of the illicit trade of tobacco products to further document its harmful impacts, as well as the benefits to health, State finances and the control of criminal activities of curbing the trade of illicit tobacco products.
- A further area of research is the active role the tobacco industry plays in supporting the illicit tobacco trade.

For more details kindly follow the link given below –

<http://www.who.int/campaigns/no-tobacco-day/2015/event/en/>