

Media Statement

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**International Union Against
Tuberculosis and Lung Disease**
Health solutions for the poor

VIETNAM AT TURNING POINT IN FIGHT AGAINST TOBACCO

National survey highlights progress as well as priority areas for the future

Edinburgh, UK, 6 September 2016 – The International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease [The Union] has today welcomed the results of a national survey in Vietnam which indicates the start of a downward trend in the numbers of people smoking.

The *GATS-Vietnam (Global Adult Tobacco Survey – Vietnam) has also highlighted a decrease in people exposed to second-hand smoke in their homes, particularly women and children, compared to a similar survey done in 2010.

The survey results were presented at a large gathering in Hanoi by Prof. Dr. Kim Bao Giang, of Hanoi Medical University, with officials from the Ministry of Health and other related government ministries in attendance.

The Union’s Director of Tobacco Control, Dr Ehsan Latif, says: “The good news is that smoking rates are no longer increasing in Vietnam which is reason for optimism as usually smoking rates tend to flatten out before they start to decline. It looks like Vietnam has turned a corner with its Tobacco Control Law - implemented in 2013 - now really starting to have an effect. Another positive finding in the survey is that second-hand smoke exposure is declining overall meaning better health for everyone - children, families and workers.”

While there is much to celebrate, the survey also reveals areas which require attention. Tobacco prices in Vietnam are amongst the lowest in the world and are not keeping up with inflation meaning that smokers can easily switch to cheaper brands.

Dr Latif adds: “If we want to see a decline in tobacco consumption, Vietnam has to increase the price of its tobacco products as these remain the cheapest in the world. The Ministries of Health and Finance need to come together to figure out the right policy for tobacco taxation as they did for the

creation of the Vietnam National Tobacco Control Fund (VNTCF), which has been instrumental in achieving the improvements reflected by the GATS results.”

The VNTCF was created under the national Tobacco Control Law and has been able to provide much needed support for tobacco control efforts at a local level. In 2015 alone, VNTCF provided grants to 67 localities (63 provinces and four tourist cities) for work on smokefree environments.

Dr Latif says: “The GATS results clearly indicate that the current efforts are working but more needs to be done. If the country is to reach its national health targets by 2020, tobacco taxation policy needs to be strengthened as a priority and implementation of current law needs to improve as the tobacco industry’s advertising campaigns are still targeting young people who have easy access to cheap cigarettes.”

The Union has been working in Vietnam since 2008, providing technical assistance and capacity building to national partners including the Vietnam Steering Committee on Smoking and Health, VNTCF, the Ministry of Finance and the Vietnam Public Health Association. The Union supported national partners in the achievement of the Vietnam National Tobacco Law in 2013, and is currently working with partners to support the effective implementation of the law and achieve a stronger tobacco taxation policy for the country.

*More information on GATS can be found here <http://nccd.cdc.gov/gtssdata> or <http://www.cdc.gov/media>

About the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union)

For nearly 100 years, The Union has drawn from the best scientific evidence and the skills, expertise and reach of its staff, consultants and membership in order to advance solutions to the most pressing public health challenges affecting people living in poverty around the world. With nearly 17,000 members and subscribers from 156 countries, The Union has its headquarters in Paris and regional offices in Africa, the Asia Pacific, Europe, Latin America, North America and South-East Asia. The Union’s scientific departments focus on tuberculosis and HIV, lung health and non-communicable diseases, tobacco control and operational research. For more information on The Union’s tobacco control work please visit www.tobaccofreeunion.org.

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