

PRESS RELEASE**World No Tobacco Day 2015, May 31: The Union calls for international solidarity on tobacco packaging laws**

Edinburgh/Paris, 28 May 2015 – On World No Tobacco Day 2015, The Union calls on countries to work together to introduce and uphold the tobacco packaging and labelling laws that have proven both to help tobacco users quit and discourage others from trying these highly addictive products.

Tobacco packaging designs have become a controversial flashpoint in the ongoing struggle between the tobacco industry and countries seeking to support public health simply because package design is so effective at influencing consumers' decisions to buy – or not buy – tobacco products.

'In 2012 the tobacco industry spent \$9.17 billion on advertising cigarettes in the USA alone – so it's clearly an investment that pays dividends,' says Dr Ehsan Latif, Director of the Department of Tobacco Control at The Union. 'As bans on overt marketing of tobacco products spread across the globe, tobacco packaging is one of the only platforms left for the industry to promote their deadly products. That's why the industry is fighting so hard against the excellent new laws that commandeer this space for public health.'

Evidence shows that effective health warnings – including large and shocking pictures and strong clear language – motivate smokers to quit and discourage non-smokers from starting.

'The graphic element vastly increases a warning's impact and is vital for communicating with young people and in areas with low literacy rates,' says Dr Latif. 'These warnings work. In Brazil, two-thirds of smokers said they made them want to quit, and, in Singapore, 71 percent said they now knew more about the health effects of smoking.'

During the past year, India, Pakistan and Nepal have introduced laws that require graphic health warnings to cover 85 percent of the surface area of tobacco packaging. Nepal's law requires 90 percent coverage. These countries now face increasing pressure from the tobacco industry to delay and water down this legislation, which are slated to be the strongest in the world.

Anticipating industry backlash to these increasingly effective restrictions, the global health community announced its commitment to stand in solidarity with these countries, at the 16th World Conference on Tobacco or Health [WCTOH] held in March this year.

The official conference declaration said: 'The delegates at WCTOH affirm their support to all countries that have passed or are considering adopting plain packaging or graphic health warnings covering more than 85 percent including India, Pakistan and Nepal and ask them to stand firm against tobacco industry pressure.'

Now that so-called standardised or plain packaging -- packs without branding, a standardised unappealing colour, and large warnings in both picture and text -- have been proven to work in Australia, several new countries have committed to introduce similar legislation. Two years after Australia's 2012 introduction of plain packs, cigarette consumption was found to have dropped by 12.8 percent.

'Australia has been taken to court repeatedly by the tobacco industry since plain packs were introduced. Now the UK and Ireland, who have just passed similar laws, are being taken to court too,' said Dr Latif. 'Just as in India, Nepal and Pakistan, Big Tobacco is taking action against governments that are exercising their

sovereign right to protect the health of their people. Countries around the world must unite and coordinate efforts to swiftly end the tobacco industry's tactics to delay this vital work.'

He said that greater coordination across countries and regions on tobacco labelling and packaging could also help curb the illicit trade of tobacco products. With collaboration across borders, effective tracking and tracing programmes could be introduced to eliminate a trade that is estimated to account for one in every 10 cigarettes smoked.

Union teams around the world will mark WNTD with events to raise awareness about the harms of tobacco use and to galvanise civil society and governments into action to protect public health.

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About World No Tobacco Day

World No Tobacco Day was introduced by the World Health Organization in 1988 to highlight the devastating impact of tobacco use on health, and advocate for countries to introduce and enforce policies that help people to quit and discourage non-users from starting. This year WHO is calling for countries to work together to end the illicit trade of tobacco products.

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. Visit www.theunion.org for more information, and www.tobaccofreeunion.org for more on The Union's tobacco control work.

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Contact : Johanna Dollerson

Mobile: +44 7827 975767

E-mail : press@theunion.org