



Press Release - FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UN agencies in Thailand join forces to fight tobacco

Bangkok, 31 May 2019 – As Thailand joins the world in marking World No Tobacco Day on 31 May, nearly 200 of its citizens will die of tobacco-related diseases on this day, as every day. Tobacco kills approximately 72,000 people in Thailand each year and costs the national economy 0.8% of its GDP.

“Tobacco use results in nearly 1.5 million people suffering from conditions such as lung disease, tuberculosis, cancer and heart disease and draining the budget for universal health coverage”, said Prof Emeritus Piyasakol Sakolsatayadorn, Minister of Public Health. Tobacco control is a top priority for the Ministry of Public Health and we are working with partners to take the strongest actions to prevent young people from taking up smoking and help smokers to quit,” he added.

Thailand is considered a global champion for adopting strong and progressive policies to curb tobacco use, including pictorial warnings on cigarette packets, strong smoke-free laws and ban on advertising. Recent actions of the Government to introduce plain packaging and increase tax on shredded tobacco are commendable.

The war against tobacco is, however, far from over. There are an estimated 10.7 million smokers in Thailand—half of them smoke hand-rolled cigarettes, which are very inexpensive.

“Tobacco hurts families, slows economic growth, deepens poverty, exacerbates inequalities and causes environmental damage,” said Ms Deirdre Boyd, United Nations Resident Coordinator in Thailand. “Strengthening tobacco control will bring Thailand closer to realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) vision of a more equitable, healthy and sustainable society. The UN system stands ready to help accelerate Thailand’s tobacco control efforts,” she added.

“Increasing the price of tobacco products through higher taxes is the most powerful weapon against tobacco,” said Dr Daniel Kertesz, World Health Organization (WHO) Representative to Thailand. “Further strengthening the tobacco taxation policy through a uniform rate and accelerating the increase of taxes on hand-rolled cigarettes will go a long way in reducing tobacco consumption and generating revenues for development activities,” he added.

Tobacco causes enormous health, economic and social damages to Thailand’s sustainable development with disproportionate impacts on vulnerable people. “Stronger tobacco control aligns with Thailand’s commitment to the SDG principle of ‘leaving no one behind’ and ‘reaching the furthest behind first,” said Mr Renaud Meyer, Resident Representative of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Thailand. “The multisectoral development impacts of tobacco require a ‘whole-of-government,’ and ‘whole-of-society’ approach to be successful,” he added.

To support Thailand’s response to tobacco and other causes of noncommunicable diseases, the UN Country Team in Thailand has recently established a unique multisectoral partnership comprising 10 UN agencies, several government ministries and civil society members.



A joint policy brief by UNDP and WHO on “Tobacco Control as an Accelerator for the Sustainable Development Goals in Thailand” is available at http://www.asia-pacific.undp.org/content/rbap/en/home/library/democratic_governance/hiv_aids/policy-brief--tobacco-control-as-an-accelerator-for-the-sustaina.html

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