

WEBINAR SUMMARY REPORT

“Strengthening Tobacco Control: Celebrating 20 Years of the WHO FCTC and Defending Public Health from Tobacco Industry Interference”

29 May 2025

The webinar commemorated 20 years of the WHO FCTC, celebrating its achievements and addressing challenges posed by tobacco industry interference.

Key Highlights

- **Opening Remarks (by Dr. Adriana Marquizo Blanco)**

The importance of the WHO FCTC in reducing tobacco use and saving lives was emphasized. Participants were called to counter rising industry interference, protect youth, and uphold the FCTC’s commitment to future generations.

- **The WHO FCTC: 20 Years of Progress (by Dr. Vera da Costa e Silva)**

The treaty has reduced smoking rates, strengthened laws, and contributed to global health goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals. Despite challenges, it remains a unifying framework for public health advancement.

- **Article 5.3: Safeguarding Health Policies (by Professor Stella Bialous)**

Article 5.3 establishes a “firewall” to prevent tobacco industry interference in policymaking. Significant progress has been achieved globally, but sustained commitment and best practices are needed to address persistent industry tactics.

- **TII: What is new? Evolving strategies and the endgame for the industry (by Dr. Douglas William Bettcher)**

The industry’s evolving strategies, including harm reduction claims and e-cigarette promotion, were analyzed. Calls to ban flavor additives, close regulatory loopholes, and maintain independence from industry influence were made.

- **Interactive Sessions and Insights**

A poll showed strong participant understanding of Article 5.3. Breakout sessions identified barriers such as political influence and enforcement gaps, with proposed solutions including stronger laws and increased awareness.

- **Youth Panelist Discussion (by Mr. Bonede Thato Mmako, Ms. Andrea Herrera Rivera, and Mr. Judy Delos Reyes)**

Youth panelists discussed challenges such as industry marketing and addiction trends while envisioning their future role in leading tobacco control. They emphasized the need for capacity building, networking, and leadership training to empower young advocates.

- **Key Questions and Responses**

- **Tobacco control priorities amid rising vaping:** Traditional cigarettes remain globally dominant, and integration of all nicotine products in control strategies is crucial.
- **Effective Article 5.3 Measures:** Codes of conduct and transparency rules were highlighted.
- **Future Industry Tactics and FCTC progress:** Ongoing deceptive tactics and diversification into sectors such as health and technology; need for vigilance, closing loopholes, flavor bans, and youth protection.

Conclusion

The webinar brought together 161 stakeholders to mark 20 years of the FCTC's impact and address industry interference. Highly rated by attendees, it fostered dialogue and strengthened commitment to Article 5.3's implementation. Follow-up actions include sharing pending questions and presentation slides.