

# World Heart Federation calls on all countries to follow example of Finland, New Zealand

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As the Tobacco End Game conference takes place in New Delhi, India, this week, The World Heart Federation today calls on countries worldwide to follow the example set by nations such as Finland, New Zealand, and Scotland to set a target year to end tobacco use in their populations. Ending tobacco use in this sense means reducing population smoking levels to 5% or below, as well as implementing further measures in the international tobacco control treaty 'The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.'

Finland (2030), Scotland (2034), New Zealand (2025), and other nations including a group of Pacific Island States (2025) have all publicly announced a 'target year' to bring their tobacco use down to below 5%. Tobacco use is one of the main [risk factors for heart disease](#) and causes millions of [premature deaths](#) each year worldwide\*. Despite this, [tobacco companies](#) continue to market their deadly product and are particularly active in low-income and middle-income nations where tobacco [control measures](#) are not as strong as in many high-income countries. In many low-income nations, the recommendations within the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) are yet to be implemented, although the treaty has now been ratified by most countries (with several notable exceptions including the USA, Indonesia, Switzerland, Argentina, Cuba, and a number of African nations). For those countries that are attempting to fully implement FCTC, such as high-income nations New Zealand, Scotland and Finland—and the middle-income countries Thailand, Turkey, and Uruguay—the World Heart Federation believes setting a target end year for tobacco use is the

next logical step.

"There is no hiding from the deadly [effects of tobacco](#) on [heart health](#)," says World Heart Federation President Professor K Srinath Reddy, based at the Public Health Foundation of India which is hosting the Tobacco End Game Congress. "There are many countries across all incomes making great strides in tobacco control and it should be possible for each of these nations to further bolster their tobacco control efforts by setting themselves a target year for reducing tobacco use below 5%. So the World Heart Federation would hope to see these countries, followed by those around the world, following the brave lead set by the countries that have announced target dates."

Professor Reddy adds: "Of course, in low-income and middle-income countries, with a few notable exceptions such as Uruguay, it may be much more difficult to set a target year for ending tobacco use at this stage. But the World Heart Federation believes that seeing other nations set an end date for tobacco use would hopefully encourage [countries](#) of all incomes to muster the political will to take further steps towards implementing measures contained with the FCTC, and ultimately set their own target end dates in the future."

Smoking is estimated to cause nearly 10 per cent of cardiovascular disease\* (CVD) and is the second leading cause of CVD, after high blood pressure. The impact of tobacco smoke is not confined solely to smokers. Nearly 6 million people die from tobacco use or exposure to secondhand smoke, accounting for 6 per cent of female and 12 per cent of male deaths worldwide, every year. By 2030 tobacco-related deaths are projected to increase to more than 8 million deaths a year. Tobacco use is, however, avoidable and advancing a tobacco-free world is a key strategic priority for the World Heart Federation. Reducing and eventually ending tobacco consumption worldwide is also a key part of the World Heart Federation's overarching strategy to reduce premature

deaths from cardiovascular disease by 25% by 2025.

During the Tobacco End Game Congress, Former WHF President Professor Pekka Puska, Director General of the National Institute for Health and Welfare in Finland, will outline the successes of [tobacco control](#) in Finland that have made a target date possible. These include completely smoke free environments, increased taxes, further reductions in availability, and strengthened protection of children from tobacco.

Finland has also discussed plans for plain packaging, following the lead taken by Australia. Finland has also placed large health warnings on its cigarette packets, offered stronger support to cessation services, strengthened regulation of products and operated a number of mass-media campaigns.

"The Finnish experience shows how determined long-term [tobacco control](#), combining strict legislation with a range of other activities, had resulted in a low level and continuously declining trends of [tobacco use](#) and the possibility to set smoke-free Finland as an official goal by the national Parliament. To reach this final goal further activities are planned both by Finnish government decisions and in interaction with the EU decisions." concludes Professor Puska.

Provided by World Heart Federation

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