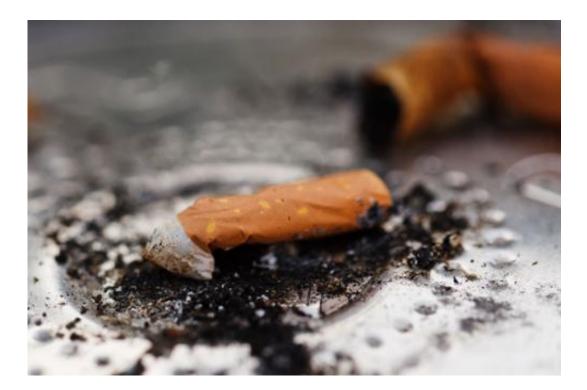# Medical Xpress

Global conference declares all tobacco products harmful

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Credit: Vera Kratochvil/public domain

A global anti-tobacco conference that ended Saturday urged countries to take steps to reduce the consumption of tobacco, which it said was a leading cause of disease and death worldwide.

In its final declaration, the 16th World Conference on Tobacco OR Health in Abu Dhabi also called for wider implementation of World

Health Organization (WHO) guidelines for cutting smoking rates and reducing the burden of non-communicable diseases.

The five-day conference, which declared that all [tobacco](#) products are harmful, said they "pose an especially heavy burden on low- and middle-income countries and should be de-normalised worldwide."

It insisted that tobacco use, in all its forms, is a major contributor to the occurrence of non-communicable disease (NCDs), such as cancer, [cardiovascular disease](#), diabetes and respiratory diseases.

Organisers warned that tobacco causes one in six of all NCD deaths and that almost half of current tobacco users will eventually die of tobacco-related disease.

And despite a decline in the number of smokers in many countries, more needs to be done to curb tobacco use to meet the global target of a 30 percent reduction in consumption by 2025.

According to the WHO, one person dies every six seconds due to tobacco—nearly six million people each year. It warns that unless urgent action is taken, the annual toll could rise to eight million by 2030.

WHO says NCDs kill 35 million people annually, of whom 80 percent are in low- and middle-income countries.

The WHO framework convention on tobacco sets out guidelines on steps governments can take, including punitive tax measures; bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship; the creation of smoke-free work and public spaces, prominent health warnings on tobacco packages and combatting illicit trade.

The treaty has been signed by 180 countries but implementation "has

fallen short of objectives," and the conference urged global cooperation to fully implement it.

The conference called for all countries to have ratified the treaty by 2018, at as well as for at least 30 countries to have adopted plain packaging and at least 100 requiring graphic warnings covering more than 50 percent of cigarette packets.

And it said that at least 15 additional countries should introduce a 70 percent hike in taxes on the retail price of tobacco products.

It also supported an initiative to be voted by parliament in the Australian state of Tasmania Tuesday to ban tobacco sales to all those born this century, to achieve a "tobacco-free generation."

The United Arab Emirates, where the conference took place, is at the forefront of anti-tobacco practices. It bans smoking in enclosed public areas and prohibits tobacco advertising and sponsorship.

It has also introduced graphic warnings on cigarette packs and prohibits the sale of tobacco products to under 18s.

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