

# WHO urges China to bolster tobacco controls

March 20 2012, By ALEX KENNEDY , Associated Press

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(AP) -- The head of the World Health Organization urged China on Tuesday to bolster controls on tobacco in a country where half of adult males smoke.

China and other Asian countries should raise taxes on [cigarette sales](#) and ban [tobacco advertising](#) and sponsorships, WHO Director General Margaret Chan said.

The Chinese government banned smoking at the 2008 Beijing Olympics and the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai, but Chan said China must do more to discourage the habit.

"They still have a long way to go, but they are making good headway," Chan told reporters at a global tobacco control conference in Singapore. "A lot of work needs to be done in China."

"Having said that, I have to say that the leadership in China understands that they need to take action, and they have over the years geared up on tobacco [control measures](#)," Chan said.

China's 350 million smokers account for about 35 percent of the 1 billion smokers worldwide, Chan said.

According to the World Lung Foundation, Chinese smokers consume about 2.3 trillion cigarettes a year. Russians are the next-biggest population of smokers with 390 billion cigarettes consumed a year, while the U.S. smokes 315 billion cigarettes.

Chan said Asian countries should follow the lead of Australia, which is seeking to allow only plain packaging on cigarette boxes. [Tobacco companies](#) are fighting the measure in court.

Chan also praised Singapore, which has some of the strictest anti-smoking laws in the world. Earlier this month, the Singapore government said it planned to extend a ban on smoking to include all corridors and staircases in residential buildings, sheltered walkways and bridges and a five-meter (16.4 feet) radius around [bus stops](#).

Environment and Water Resources Minister Grace Fu told Parliament that Singapore's long-term goal is to prohibit smoking in all public places, except designated smoking areas.

"Our aim is to work toward a future where Singaporeans consider smoking not only detrimental to health, but also socially unacceptable," Fu said.

Even with the restrictions and taxes that push the cost of a pack of 20 Marlboro cigarettes to 12.40 Singapore dollars (\$9.85), about a third of Singaporean [adult males](#) smoke.

In other Asian countries, the habit is even more deeply rooted. About 47 percent of adult males in the Philippines smoke regularly, 49 percent in South Korea and 57 percent in Indonesia, according to the World Lung Foundation.

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Citation: WHO urges China to bolster tobacco controls (2012, March 20) retrieved 25 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2012-03-urges-china-bolster-tobacco.html>

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