
Follow-up to the political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases

Strengthening synergies between the World Health Assembly and the Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

The Director-General has the honour to transmit to the Seventy-seventh World Health Assembly the report submitted by the Head of the Convention Secretariat on behalf of the Tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (see Annex). The report also contains information on the outcomes of the Third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products.

ANNEX

REPORT BY THE HEAD OF THE CONVENTION SECRETARIAT

1. Pursuant to decisions WHA69(13) (2016), WHA70(20) (2017) and FCTC/COP7(18) (2016), this report to the Health Assembly describes the main outcomes of the Tenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC). It also describes the main outcomes of the Third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products (the Protocol).
2. In the context of the postponement of the Conference of the Parties due to security reasons communicated by Panama, the Bureau of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO FCTC approved arrangements to hold a *de minimis* virtual session on 23 and 24 November 2023, using videoconferencing technology. This *de minimis* session considered an abridged agenda, as described in document FCTC/COP/10/1 Add.2 Rev.1, and was attended by 158 Parties to the Convention. Also present were representatives of two States non-Parties, as well as five international intergovernmental organizations and 17 nongovernmental organizations accredited as observers.¹
3. During the opening of the session, the Conference of the Parties adopted the special procedures for the conduct of the *de minimis* virtual session. The Conference of the Parties also provisionally considered and adopted on an interim basis the workplan and budget for the financial period 2024–2025, to ensure continuity of operations of the Convention Secretariat beyond 31 December 2023. The committees of the Conference did not convene.
4. The Conference of the Parties resumed at an in-person session in Panama City, Panama, from 5 to 10 February 2024. It was attended by almost 1 100 participants representing 142 Parties, three States non-Parties, four international intergovernmental organizations, 18 nongovernmental organizations accredited as observers.¹
5. The Conference of the Parties adopted 25 decisions,² of which nine related to the proceedings and general matters, eight to budgetary and institutional matters, four to treaty instruments and technical matters, three to reporting, implementation assistance and international cooperation, and one to a declaration.
6. One key outcome was decision FCTC/COP10(25), whereby the Conference of the Parties adopted a workplan and budget for the financial period 2024–2025, which the Convention Secretariat, pursuant to decision FCTC/COP8(16) (2019), had drafted in line with the Global Strategy to Accelerate Tobacco Control: Advancing Sustainable Development through the Implementation of the WHO FCTC 2019–2025. The Conference of the Parties, through the adoption of decision FCTC/COP10(15), also decided to extend the Global Strategy until 2030 to ensure coherence and alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Conference of the Parties also adopted decision FCTC/COP10(17) urging Parties to pay their assessed contributions in full, in order to ensure that adequate resources were available to implement the adopted workplan and budget.

¹ For the list of participants, see document FCTC/COP/10/DIV/1/Rev.1.

² Available at <https://storage.googleapis.com/who-fctc-cop10/Decisions/index.html> (accessed 22 April 2024).

7. Another milestone was decision FCTC/COP10(14), which urged Parties to take account of the environmental impacts of the cultivation, manufacture, consumption and waste disposal of tobacco products and related electronic devices, and to strengthen the implementation of Article 18 of the WHO FCTC. The decision also addressed the problem of cigarette filters contained in an estimated 4.5 trillion cigarette butts discarded annually worldwide, representing 766.6 million kilograms of toxic waste containing plastics. The decision on Article 18 was timely, given the ongoing sessions of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.

8. In another significant outcome (decision FCTC/COP10(23)), the Conference of the Parties decided to adopt the Specific guidelines to address cross-border tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, and the depiction of tobacco in entertainment media for implementation of Article 13 of the WHO FCTC. This decision is particularly important, given that the landscape of entertainment media has changed substantially since adoption of the Guidelines for implementation of Article 13 and that access to entertainment media is increasingly digital and available via the internet, with creation, production, provision and consumption increasingly crossing national borders. The decision also acknowledged that, in this context, tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship now includes a focus on digital marketing, such as social media, which increases the exposure of adolescents and young people to tobacco advertising.

9. The Conference of the Parties was also requested to establish two expert groups – one to focus on forward-looking tobacco control measures in relation to Article 2.1 of the WHO FCTC, described in decision FCTC/COP10(12), and a second to focus on the implementation of Article 19, which concerns liability (decision FCTC/COP10(13)).

10. Other decisions adopted by the Conference of the Parties were related to the contribution of the WHO FCTC to the promotion of human rights (FCTC/COP10(20)) and the establishment of the Voluntary Implementation Peer Review and Support Mechanism in accordance with specific objective 3.1.2 of the Global Strategy (FCTC/COP10(22)).

11. In another significant outcome (decision FCTC/COP10(11)), the Conference of the Parties adopted the Panama Declaration, which urged Parties to strengthen the implementation of measures and enhance policy coherence within governments to prevent tobacco industry interference in public health policies and to continue to monitor technological developments in respect of novel and emerging nicotine and tobacco products. The Declaration also urged Parties to provide accurate information on the nicotine addiction and health risks associated with the use of such products; to monitor the market presence and marketing strategies used for all tobacco products and novel and emerging nicotine and tobacco products in entertainment media; and to strengthen measures to prevent and address the negative impact of tobacco on the environment.

12. The Conference of the Parties again emphasized the importance of international cooperation and the special contribution of nongovernmental organizations not affiliated with the tobacco industry to the implementation of the WHO FCTC and granted observer status to three new applicants in decision FCTC/COP/10(6).

13. The Conference of the Parties adopted decision FCTC/COP10(19) to improve the reporting system/instrument of the WHO FCTC. The Convention Secretariat will now develop a new online reporting platform, incorporating the revised reporting instrument and features to make the platform as user-friendly as possible, and will test it with the Parties, so that it may be used as of the next reporting cycle. The Meeting of the Parties similarly adopted decision FCTC/MOP3(17) and welcomed the revised reporting instrument of the Protocol.

14. The Conference of the Parties adopted decision FCTC/COP10(24) containing amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the Parties. The amendments relate to: rules in relation to the attendance of media; arrangements for the live webcasting of agenda items for plenary meetings and of virtual sessions for extraordinary situations; and providing for the possibility of designating an acting Head of the Secretariat when required.
15. The Conference of the Parties decided (FCTC/COP10(16)) to establish a single Oversight Committee serving the Protocol and the WHO FCTC investment funds to ensure management synergies between the investment funds. The Meeting of the Parties similarly adopted decision FCTC/MOP3(10) to establish a single Oversight Committee serving the Protocol and the WHO FCTC investment funds.
16. The Conference of the Parties also took note of, and thanked the WHO Director-General for, the report on strengthening synergies between the Conference of the Parties and the World Health Assembly on the resolutions and decisions of the Seventy-fifth and Seventy-sixth World Health Assemblies, and those of the WHO regional committees, as contained in document FCTC/COP/10/22.
17. The Conference of the Parties and the Meeting of the Parties were open to the media, which had the opportunity to observe all public and open sessions. In addition, closing press conferences were broadcast for the first time. Another significant development at the Conference of the Parties was that, for the first time, youth organizations and young activists from around the world gathered under the common banner of “Global Youth Voices” to deliver a powerful message, reminding Parties that they have the power to change the course of the future for the world’s young people.
18. The outcomes of the Third session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol, which was held immediately after the Conference of the Parties, in keeping with past practice, are outlined below. As of 22 April 2024, the Protocol has 68 Parties.
19. In the context of the postponement of the Third session of the Meeting of the Parties due to security reasons communicated by Panama, the Bureau of the Meeting of the Parties approved arrangements to open its Third session at a *de minimis* virtual session on 29 and 30 November 2023, using videoconferencing technology. This *de minimis* session considered an abridged agenda, as described in document FCTC/MOP/3/1 Add.1, and was attended by 58 Parties to the Protocol. Also present were representatives of 38 States non-Parties, as well as two international intergovernmental organizations and seven nongovernmental organizations accredited as observers.¹
20. During the opening of the session, the Meeting of the Parties adopted the special procedures for the conduct of the *de minimis* virtual session. The Meeting of the Parties also provisionally considered and adopted on an interim basis the workplan and budget for the financial period 2024–2025, to ensure continuity of operations of the Convention Secretariat beyond 31 December 2023. The committees of the Meeting of the Parties did not convene.
21. The Meeting of the Parties resumed at an in-person session in Panama City, Panama, from 12 to 15 February 2024. It was attended by over 500 participants from 59 Parties to the Protocol, 37 States non-Parties, two international intergovernmental organizations, seven nongovernmental organizations accredited as observers.¹
22. The Meeting of the Parties adopted 20 decisions,² of which nine related to the proceedings and general matters, seven to budgetary and institutional matters, two to treaty instruments and technical matters, one to reporting, implementation assistance and international cooperation, and one to a declaration.

¹ For the list of participants, see document FCTC/MOP/3/DIV/1/Rev.1.

² Available at <https://storage.googleapis.com/protocol-mop3/Decisions/index.html> (accessed on 22 April 2024).

23. The Meeting of the Parties adopted its workplan and budget for the financial period 2024–2025 through decision FCTC/MOP3(13). The decision outlined the approach that will be taken to encourage Parties to pay their assessed contributions, emphasized as mandatory financial contributions of each Party in decision FCTC/MOP3(9).
24. The Meeting of the Parties adopted decision FCTC/MOP3(15) on the global information-sharing focal point, which reminded Parties of their obligation to establish a tracking and tracing system for cigarettes within a period of five years, and for other tobacco products within a period of 10 years, from the entry into force of the Protocol for each Party, and to make appropriate use of the global information-sharing focal point. The decision also requested the Convention Secretariat to continue operating the global information-sharing focal point system, as established since September 2023, with a view to ensuring the efficient exchange of information between the Parties in accordance with Article 8 of the Protocol.
25. In addition, the Meeting of the Parties adopted decision FCTC/MOP3(16), in which it adopted the road map to conduct evidence-based research in accordance with Article 6.5 of the Protocol on key inputs essential to the manufacture of tobacco products that can be subject to an effective control mechanism, and Article 13.2 of the Protocol on the extent of illicit trade in tobacco products related to duty free sales of such products.
26. The Meeting of the Parties adopted decision FCTC/MOP3(17) to improve the reporting system/instrument of the Protocol. The Convention Secretariat will now develop a new online reporting platform, incorporating the revised reporting instrument and features to make the platform as user-friendly as possible, and will test it with the Parties, so that it may be used as of the next reporting cycle. The Conference of the Parties similarly adopted decision FCTC/COP10(19) and adopted the revised reporting instrument of the WHO FCTC.
27. The Meeting of the Parties adopted decision FCTC/MOP3(14) containing amendments to the Rules of Procedure of the Meeting of the Parties. The amendments relate to: rules in relation to regional economic integration organizations and their status as observers; attendance of media; arrangements for the live webcasting of agenda items for plenary meetings and of virtual sessions for extraordinary situations; and providing for the possibility of designating an acting Head of the Secretariat when required.
28. In respect of institutional matters of joint interest, the Conference of the Parties and the Meeting of the Parties adopted the same decision, respectively FCTC/COP10(21) and FCTC/MOP3(12), on the appointment of the Head of the Convention Secretariat and renewal of the term of office.
29. The Meeting of the Parties again emphasized the importance of international cooperation and the special contribution of intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations not affiliated with the tobacco industry to the implementation of the Protocol and granted observer status to four new applicants in decision FCTC/MOP3(7).
30. Lastly, the Conference of the Parties and the Meeting of the Parties adopted decisions FCTC/COP10(9) and FCTC/MOP3(18), respectively, to hold the next sessions at a date and place to be confirmed by the incoming Bureaus, with the support of the Convention Secretariat.

= = =