Aligning the WHO FCTC and the UN Treaty to End Plastic Pollution

January 25, 2024
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Speakers

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The Environmental Impact of Tobacco Products
Relevance to the Plastics Treaty

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January 25, 2024
Life Cycle of Tobacco Products

Cigarette Production

Tobacco Growing

Cigarette Transportation

Cigarette Consumption

Cigarette Waste Disposal

Environmental Issues

Relevance to Plastics Treaty
Cigarette butts: **No. 1** littered item found on beaches and waterways worldwide

- >30% of all beach litter
- 10-20% of small urban litter (by number of items)
How much trash is that?

- 5.6 trillion cigarettes sold each year globally, 20%-65% are discarded somewhere; therefore, up to **4.5 TRILLION butts/year**
- >95% of commercial cigarettes sold are filtered, mainly with the *cellulose acetate filter* (a persistent plastic waste product)
- Weight of 20 cigarette filters is 3.4 gm;
- Estimated annual global weight of butt waste: **765,000 MT**
- Does not include packages, lighters, matches, and other tobacco products (cigars, e-cigs, and smokeless tobacco pouches).
Cellulose Acetate Filters Are a Health and Environmental Hazard

- Each filter releases ~100 microfibers/day (<0.2 mm);
- Cellulose acetate detected in urban runoff;
- Cigarette butt leachates toxic to water fleas, frogs, worms, fish, mollusks, plants;
- Changes diversity of microbial communities;
- Microplastics found in humans but unknown health effects.
Other Possible Human and Animal Health Impacts

• **Sublethal effects:** Estrogenicity, tumorogenicity, and teratogenesis.

• **Bio accumulation:** in the environment and food chain.

• **Biotransformation:** Toxic chemicals (e.g., nicotine) can transform to carcinogenic tobacco specific nitrosamines (TSNAs)

Audobon Magazine, 2019
Costs of Tobacco Product Waste

- **Surface Abatement**: Automated and mechanized labor and manual labor.
- **System Abatement**: Waste and litter removal from stormwater and wastewater.
- **Disposal**: TPW is hazardous waste; when disposed in landfills harms the environment.
- **Prevention**: Enforcement of laws aimed at unlawful waste disposal.
- **Unabated Litter & Waste**: Contaminates various ecosystems including marine life and businesses.

Secondary costs
The Filter Fraud

- Main purpose of the cigarette filter for tobacco industry:
  - to lower the cost of manufacturing (cellulose acetate is cheaper than tobacco leaf);
  - to keep tobacco bits from entering the mouths of smokers;
  - to convince people into thinking that filtered brands were somehow ‘safer’ than unfiltered brands.

- ‘Safer cigarette’: Fraudulent marketing tool;
- Light, low tar terms now prohibited.
Banning Sale of Filters and Other ‘Disposabe’ Tobacco Products

- Made of cellulose acetate, a non-biodegradable plastic;
- Cigarette filters are specifically designed to accumulate particulate smoke components including toxic chemicals...that leach out into the environment;
- *Biodegradable filters* are not marketable and would increase TPW.

*Photo by Chris Register, Clean Virginia Waterways*
E-Cigarette Waste

• **Electronic Cigarettes**
  - Single use plastic products, reservoirs, components: hazardous waste;
  - Littered e-liquid reservoirs a source of nicotine and other toxic chemicals;
  - Littered electronic components may leach metals into environment (lithium).

E-cigarette waste collected From Bay Area middle and high school grounds (MMWR 2020)
Clear Messages and Resources

- **California Tobacco Control Program White Paper on TPW:**
  https://merg.sdsu.edu/tpwwp/
- Novotny TE, Hamzai L. Cellulose acetate cigarette filter is hazardous to human health. *Tob Control*; 18 April 2023. doi: 10.1136/tc-2023-057925
POISONING OUR PLANET

#TobaccoExposed

Throughout its lifecycle, tobacco pollutes the planet & damages the health of all people.
Opportunities

Include tobacco product waste (cigarette butts and disposable electronic cigarettes) under the Annex for problematic and avoidable plastic products (with the aim to phase out and eventually ban these products).

Extended Producer Responsibility
In the phase-out period, use EPR schemes to hold the tobacco industry accountable for the tobacco product waste, including collection and disposal of these products. Important to ensure that the industry does not use this as an avenue to position itself as a ‘sustainable enterprise’.

Importance of transparency and management of potential conflicts of interest with public health or environmental objectives in the development and implementation of the treaty.
Resources

WHO Report - Tobacco: Poisoning our planet
https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240051287

WHO's statement at INC1

WHO's statement at INC2

WHO's submission before INC3 and statement at INC3

Thank you
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Addressing tobacco production health and environmental impacts in the WHO FCTC provisions and decisions

Dra. Vera Luiza da Costa e Silva
Executive Secretary of the National Comission for the implementation of the WHO FCTC and Protocols
National Cancer Institute / Ministry of Health
What is at stake:

Tobacco production and consumption chain pollute the environment from cradle to grave, moving it from being a human problem to a planetary problem.

Tobacco production costs the world:
- 600 million trees,
- 200,000 hectares of land
- 22 billion tons of water and
- Emits 84 million tons of CO2.

8 million human lives
Overall impact

**ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

**CULTIVATION**
- Deforestation for the release of areas for tobacco cultivation
- Contamination of water and soil due to pesticide use
- Soil degradation
- Threat to biodiversity

Tobacco production requires up to eight times more water than the production of tomatoes or potatoes.¹

**CURING AND CLASSIFICATION OF LEAVES**
- Air pollution due to wood burning for drying.

**MANUFACTURING**
- The WHO estimates that the manufacturing of tobacco products emits over 8 million metric tons of CO₂ equivalent every year.
- In 2015, a single company – BAT – was responsible for emitting 876,000 metric tons of CO₂ equivalent. It is the same volume emitted by 3 million transatlantic flights.

**DISPOSAL**
- Cigarette butts contain more than 7,000 toxic chemicals, which can accumulate in the environment and pollute the soil and water resources, impacting aquatic life.⁴
- Each year, 4.5 trillion cigarette butts are discarded globally. This volume is 26.5 million cubic meters, enough to cover Central Park in New York.⁵
- The decomposition time of cigarette filters can vary from 18 months to 10 years. However, as the components are toxic, environmental damage is independent of this time.⁶
- Electronic cigarettes contain batteries with lithium ions, cartridges, circuits, liquid chemicals, plastic, and metal materials. Their disposal generates toxic waste, plastic waste, and microplastics.⁷
- The disposal of cigarette butts and lit matchsticks can lead to fires.

**TOBACCO PRODUCTS USE**
- Air pollution caused by cigarette smoke, which releases thousands of compounds and chemicals.
- Cigarette smoke contains nicotine, tar, carbon monoxide, ammonia, ketones, formaldehyde, acetaldehyde, and acrolein, among other toxic, carcinogenic substances, and greenhouse gases.⁸,⁹
- It is estimated that 80 million tons of CO₂ are released into the environment every year. This number is equivalent to the amount of CO₂ released by 17 million gasoline-powered cars annually.¹⁰

**HEALTH IMPACTS**

**CULTIVATION AND HARVEST**
- Those involved – including children, pregnant women, and the elderly – are susceptible to injuries and illnesses. The main ones are:
  - Green Tobacco Sickness
  - Acute and chronic pesticide intoxications
  - Osteomuscular disorders, such as tendonitis and lower back pain
  - Mental and behavioral disorders
  - Cancer
  - Respiratory problems
  - Injuries resulting from accidents

The population near tobacco cultivation areas may experience health problems due to exposure to air, water, soil, and food contaminated with pesticides.
In Brazil

It is estimated that Brazil incurs a cost of **US$ 202.7 million per year** for cleaning up waste generated after the consumption of tobacco products, such as cigarette butts. These costs fall on taxpayers and not on the industry responsible for the problem.²

Curing and Classification of Leaves

- Issues arise from exposure to smoke from wood burning in curing barns and dust from dried tobacco.
- Workers face forced postures, lifting, and carrying heavy loads for task completion.
- The task involves prolonged working hours.

Manufacturing and Distribution

- In 2022, 220 workplace accident reports were issued related to “industrial processing of tobacco” and “manufacture of tobacco products.”
- Of these, 169 occurred in the Southern region.

Between 2010 and 2019

- **760 cases** of Green Tobacco Sickness and **1,823 cases** of pesticide poisoning were reported in tobacco farming in Brazil.³

  - Children and adolescents accounted for **12.2%** of those affected.²

Tobacco farming is on Brazil’s list of the worst forms of child labor, established in 2008.³

Of the registered cases of pesticide poisoning due to agricultural work, **11.2%** occurred in **tobacco cultivation** - the crop with the highest number of records.²
WHAT DOES ARTICLE 18 OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON TOBACCO CONTROL (WHO FCTC) DEAL WITH?

Article 18 of the WHO FCTC states: “In carrying out their obligations under this Convention, the Parties agree to have due regard to the protection of the environment and the health of persons in relation to the environment in respect of tobacco cultivation and manufacture within their respective territories.”

.....new studies and market changes have increasingly raised the attention regarding additional aspects of the environmental impact of tobacco that are not linked to tobacco growing and that concerns not only tobacco-producing countries.
• Proposed by Brazil, with support from Panamá and Equador
• Many countries sent comments and suggestions to the draft
• Strong connection with global environmental agenda:
  ➔ 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (SDGs 2, 3, 6, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15)
  ➔ Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution
  ➔ United Nations Climate Change conferences
Draft decision: implementation of Article 18 of the WHO FCTC

Main aspects:

• to urge Parties to take account of the environmental impacts from cultivation, curing, production, distribution, consumption and waste disposal of tobacco products and to strengthen the implementation of FCTC Article 18;

• to invite all Parties to improve the implementation of FCTC Article 17, giving particular attention to strengthening national laws that protect the environment and the health of persons in respect of tobacco cultivation and manufacture;

• to invite Parties, under FCTC Article 19, to hold the tobacco industry accountable for the damage it causes to the environment and the adverse health effects on workers involved in the cultivation and manufacture of tobacco products, and the disposal and treatment of waste resulting from their manufacture and consumption;

• to urge Parties to align efforts to address plastic pollution with the objectives of the WHO FCTC in relation to national policies and international treaties dealing with plastics and hazardous waste;
Draft decision: implementation of Article 18 of the WHO FCTC

Main aspects:

• to urge Parties to establish measures to protect the rights of workers exposed to occupational hazards in tobacco cultivation and manufacture, as well as to implement actions to protect the rights of persons exposed to tobacco smoke in workplaces;

• to urge Parties to protect tobacco-related environmental policies from the commercial and vested interests of the tobacco industry and those working to further its interests;

• to urge Parties to strengthen bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, in particular the prohibition of corporate social responsibility or sustainability activities of the tobacco industry, especially those related to the environment and climate;
Thanks!
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Aligning plastic policies with tobacco control and preventing industry interference

Laura Salgado
Head of Campaign and Partnership
Stop Tobacco Pollution Alliance (STPA)

• A 100-organization-strong global movement with a unified position aligned with WHO FCTC.
The movement has been heard at the UN Plastics Treaty Negotiations.

Sustained interest: environment, youth, mainstream.
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Resource to Use

U.S. Tobacco Lobbyist & Lobbying Firm Registration Tracker 2023
ash.org/tobacco-money