



Permanent Mission of Sri Lanka to the UN, Geneva

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"Pictorial warning is the most cost effective means of controlling tobacco related NCDs, including cancer "- WHO DG tells event hosted by Sri Lanka in Geneva



Dr. Margaret Chan, the Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO) has said "Pictorial warning is the most cost effective means of controlling tobacco related Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs), including cancer ", and that "countries can get return on their investment in multiple areas". Paying tribute to countries including Sri Lanka whom she said "had the courage to keep going despite heavy resistance by the tobacco industry", Dr. Chan said "without our joint effort, you know what effect tobacco would take. We should not allow an industry to intimidate governments, make money and leave you with all the health consequences". She urged that "the international community come together to fight the tobacco industry".

Dr. Chan made these observations when she inaugurated a session on the theme "Strategies to overcome resistance against pictorial warning messages in tobacco products", hosted by Sri Lanka on the sidelines of the 68th World Health Assembly at the Palais des Nations in Geneva on Monday (25th May 2015).





This was the first ever side event hosted by Sri Lanka during an annual assembly. Thailand, Bangladesh, Bhutan and the WHO co-sponsored the event to show case problems encountered when taking steps to implement pictorial warnings in cigarette packets and how Sri Lanka, Thailand and Bangladesh as well as other countries had overcome the resistance. Lessons learnt will be useful to other member states. A documentary produced by Sri Lanka named "Against the tide" depicted the resistance encountered. The steps taken by Sri Lanka were appreciated by all who attended.

Delegates from member states attended the event. Among the speakers were Dr Luminita SANDA, WHO/PND, Medical Officer presenting the "overall global view", Sri Lankan perspective by Dr V.T.S.K Siriwardana, Director, Noncommunicable Diseases, Dr. Suriya Wongkong Kathep Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand and Azam-E-Sadat, Deputy Secretary (WHO), Ministry of Health & Family Welfare, Bangladesh. The session was moderated by Dr Neelamani Rajapaksa Hewageegana /Deputy Director General of Health Services Planning.

Speakers noted that the tobacco epidemic will cause the most harm to low- and middle-income countries, and that every death from tobacco products is preventable. Understanding this fact 56th World Health Assembly on 21 May 2003 adopted a treaty, The World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) to protect present and future generations from the devastating health, social, environmental and economic consequences of tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke by enacting a set of universal standards stating the dangers of tobacco and limiting its use in all forms worldwide. Regulations to introduce pictorial health warnings on tobacco packages was a step in this regulation.

Sri Lanka Permanent Mission
Geneva

26 May 2015

In the context of the 68th World Health Assembly,
you are cordially invited to join the delegations of
Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Thailand
for a side event focusing on

**Strategies to overcome resistance
against pictorial warning messages
on tobacco products**

**Monday 25 May 2015
12:30 – 14:00**
Room XXIV Palais des Nations

Chair	Dr D. M. R. B. Dissanayake, Ministry of Health and Indigenous Medicine, Sri Lanka
Co-Chair	Dr Douglas Bettcher, Prevention of Noncommunicable Diseases, WHO
Moderator	Dr Neelamani Rajapaksa Hewageegana, Ministry of Health and Indigenous Medicine, Sri Lanka
Speakers from	Bangladesh, Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, WHO