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SFP Press release

World No Tobacco Day cocktail reception 2016: The 2014 Tobacco Products Directive and Plain Packaging Progress in the EU

Brussels, 31 May 2016- During a reception at the European Parliament to celebrate World No Tobacco Day 2016, organised by the Smokefree Partnership and 12 other health and tobacco control organisations, participants celebrated the entry into force of the Tobacco Products Directive and the implementation of plain packaging in the UK and France, with Ireland soon to follow, a measure made possible under the 2014 TPD. The reception was hosted by MEP Linda McAvan, European Parliament Rapporteur on the Tobacco products Directive, and included speeches by European Commissioner for Health and Food Safety Vytenis Andriukaitis and the Chief Scientist and WHO Representative to the EU Roberto Bertollini.

World No Tobacco Day 2016 has as a theme “Get Ready for Plain Packaging” in order to recognise the impact of this measure on preventing the uptake of smoking in children and young people.

During the reception, Dr. Bertollini presented the World No Tobacco Day Awards to three European awards recipients. Each year, on the occasion of World No Tobacco Day on 31 May, the World Health Organization (WHO) gives recognition to individuals or organizations for their accomplishments in the area of tobacco control. This year, Emmanuelle Béguinot, Director of the Centre National Contre le Tabagisme (CNCT) in France, was recognised for her outstanding contribution to civil society advocacy towards the introduction of plain packaging in France. Romanian MP Aurelia Cristea was recognised for her efforts in championing the adoption of a new smokefree law in Romania; and the Coalition Romania Breathes was recognised for its efforts to promote public awareness and support, as well as for its policy advocacy efforts towards the implementation of the smokefree law.

During the reception, the International Network of Women against Tobacco (INWAT) Europe also presented MEP McAvan with the INWAT Europe Patti White Award for Outstanding Contribution to Tobacco Control, in recognition of her work to secure the adoption of a strong Tobacco Products Directive.

Quotes:

Linda McAvan MEP said: “Coming just 11 days after the implementation of the Tobacco Products Directive, the theme of this year's World No Tobacco Day, calling on all countries worldwide to implement plain packaging, is very timely. Tobacco use prematurely kills an estimated 700,000 people in the EU each year. Today we can therefore celebrate that these new laws will have a hugely positive impact on public health across the EU. It marks an important step in preventing a new generation of young people from taking up smoking.”

Commissioner Andriukaitis said: "With the Tobacco Products Directive, Europe now has some of the most ambitious tobacco control measures in the world. And thanks to the commitment of national governments, of members of the European and national Parliaments, and of the health community, other tobacco control measures such as plain packaging, smoke free environments and higher taxes are starting to deliver results. I

am fully committed to strengthening tobacco control and encourage you all to join forces to advance our common cause."

SFP President Susanne Løgstrup said: Today we celebrate those who worked hard for the implementation of strong labelling and packaging measures for tobacco products, from the mandatory large pictorial warnings introduced by the Tobacco Products Directive, to the implementation of plain packaging in European countries. Weakening the appeal of tobacco products is a key measure to prevent smoking, especially in the youngest targets of tobacco marketing. Much work remains to be done to combat the tobacco epidemic, but today we take stock of the tremendous progress made and the hard work of policy-makers, health professionals and civil society organisations to make that a reality.

Roberto Bertolini, WHO Chief Scientist and EU Representative, said: As countries get ready to introduce plain packaging, this World No Tobacco Day helps bring into focus the best practice in preventing tobacco use as well as the important next steps that countries must contemplate in tobacco control. Most importantly, World No Tobacco Day each year highlights the need to sustaining the political will across all areas of government to fight tobacco use through the implementation of the best practices enshrined in the FCTC.

Emmanuelle Béguinot, CNCT Director, said: "France adopted plain packaging in 2016, one of three countries with this policy in place. We look forward to see many other countries join in adopting this measure. By adopting plain packaging, governments help reduce the glamour and attractiveness of a deadly product. Plain packaging is the emblematic measure of a comprehensive program for tobacco control in France that includes the transposition of the new European Tobacco Products Directive and also unprecedented measures like the protection of public policies from the interference of the tobacco industry. We will continue advocating in France towards the implementation of a well-resourced tobacco control fund and of higher tobacco taxes to enforce and strengthen all the existing measures in a comprehensive way and achieve a tobacco free generation by 2032.

Aurelia Cristea, Member of the Romanian chamber of Deputies, said: "I proudly accept this award on behalf of the over 70% of Romanian citizens that have fully supported this initiative- it is the combined award of the civil society and the political representatives that understood the value of placing public health principles above any other consideration. It is, beyond any doubt, a living proof of how public policies can be developed in an effective partnership with the voice of the community. I strongly hope that this will become a model to be followed, for the benefit of healthier future generations"

Ramona Brad, on behalf of the Coalition Romania Breathes, said: "This award is an expression of the value that participatory democracy in developing public health policies can have- it is now more important than ever before for civil society to come forward and push for adequate prioritisation of public health on the political agenda. Coalition Romania Breathes is the direct result of such an approach and a blueprint that could be used successfully in other public health initiatives of utmost importance for the communities in which we live."

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