



MEDIA BRIEFER

Contribution of the WHO FCTC to the promotion and fulfilment of human rights

Report by the Convention Secretariat

The purpose of the report by the Convention Secretariat is to highlight the mutually supportive nature of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) and human rights. It provides additional considerations on the nexus between tobacco control and human rights and outlines the work of the Convention Secretariat on this subject.

The report is intended to help the Parties deliberate the matter under the item “Contribution of the WHO FCTC to the promotion and fulfilment of human rights” proposed by a Party.

The mutually supportive nature of WHO FCTC and human rights

The WHO FCTC is “an evidence-based treaty that reaffirms the right of all people to the highest standard of health”. The right to health is embedded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and is recognized in the World Health Organization (WHO) Constitution. It is also enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention on the Rights of the Child – three human rights instruments that are recalled in WHO FCTC Preamble.

The WHO FCTC has the objective “to protect present and future generations from the devastating health, social, environmental and economic consequences of tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke”. Consequences such as these may be considered to be adverse impacts on human rights.

The Global Strategy to Accelerate Tobacco Control: Advancing Sustainable Development through the Implementation of the WHO FCTC 2019–2025 emphasizes that the adverse consequences of tobacco include threats to basic human rights, including the right to the highest sustainable standard of health.

The report points to decisions of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the WHO FCTC and guidelines for implementation of several articles of the WHO FCTC, which are building on the link between tobacco control and human rights. These references can be studied in greater detail at: <https://storage.googleapis.com/who-fctc-cop10-source/Main%20documents/fctc-cop10-15-en.pdf>

The nexus between tobacco control and human rights

The report draws attention to how strengthening the implementation of the WHO FCTC is embedded in Target 3.a of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and reminds that the treaty is an accelerator for sustainable development.

It further highlights that the Preamble of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development states that the SDGs “seek to realize the human rights of all” and that “they are integrated and indivisible and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental”.

The report points out that the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and human rights are mutually reinforcing, as recognized by the Human Rights Council, and that the work of human rights treaty bodies provides avenues to promote and accelerate the implementation of the WHO FCTC.

For more detail, please refer to the full text of the report.

Work of the Convention Secretariat on human rights

The Convention Secretariat engaged in human rights-related activities in line with COP decisions and Article 24 of the WHO FCTC in order to raise the visibility of the treaty in human rights fora within the scope of international cooperation.

For example, the Convention Secretariat participated in discussions of the open-ended intergovernmental working group on transnational corporations and other business enterprises with respect to human rights in order to share experience about negotiation of the WHO FCTC and Article 5.3 of the Convention (on preventing tobacco industry interference in public health policies).

Rights of groups in vulnerable situations

The Convention Secretariat repeatedly raises awareness about the WHO FCTC as a tool to protect groups in vulnerable situations from tobacco harms by recalling that the comprehensive implementation of the treaty, as well as implementation of specific provisions contribute to the protection of the rights of the child (including the right to be free from labour), women’s rights, indigenous peoples’ rights and the rights of the economically vulnerable groups, such as tobacco growers and workers.

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