

**10th Anniversary of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control,
27 February 2015, Statement**

Thank you Chair

Director General, Minister, Excellencies,

It is a pleasure to be here today to celebrate the 10th anniversary of this Convention which has had a clear and important impact upon the health and lives of the population of the States Parties, not least in my own country, Ireland.

Ireland has been a strong supporter of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control since its inception. The FCTC Conference of the Parties has been instrumental in identifying and promoting many of the tobacco control public health measures that have been introduced in Ireland over the past ten years, including initiatives to ban smoking in the workplace and to ban the advertising and display of tobacco products. We are grateful for the vital role played by the FCTC Secretariat, and its successive Heads, in supporting countries to implement stringent tobacco control measures, and we would like to take the opportunity to thank the current Head, Dr da Costa e Silva, for continuing to speak out strongly on tobacco issues. We thank also WHO, and we were very heartened and encouraged by the support expressed by you, DG Chan, for our range of tobacco control legislation during your visit to Dublin last year.

Ireland has been a leader in tobacco control measures and we are proud of the path we have forged in the area of tobacco legislation. However, the battle against harmful tobacco products is not yet complete.

Despite the stringent measures put in place over the past ten years, some 12% of Irish children aged between ten and 17 years are reported as current smokers. Indeed, one European study shows that Ireland has the lowest age of children starting to smoke among all EU Member States. While the number of young people smoking has dropped considerably over the years, 12% is an unacceptable figure.

Our job will not be done until we can significantly reduce the numbers of young people starting to smoke and it is for this reason that Ireland is proceeding with legislation to provide for the standardisation of tobacco packaging, as well as to implement the packaging aspects of the Tobacco Products Directive of the European Union. A bill on standardised packaging passed the final stage of our Parliament just yesterday, and is expected to be enacted in the coming months. The objective behind this bill is to make all tobacco packs look less attractive to consumers and to make health warnings more prominent. We hope to also denormalise tobacco use by reducing the visibility and attractiveness of tobacco products and associated imagery.

We know from research that branded tobacco packaging is a critically important part of tobacco promotion. We know that health warnings are more effective on plain backgrounds. We know that standardised packs are less attractive and less appealing to consumers, particularly children. There is a significant evidence base and it is showing us that standardised packaging works.

The plain packaging issue has been aired in the World Trade Organisation here in Geneva, including a discussion earlier this very week, and we acknowledge and welcome the ongoing contributions being made to the debates there by the WHO and FCTC.

Despite pressure, Ireland is determined to enact this bill, because we know that this measure will help protect our children, and our children's children, from ever starting to smoke and so add many years of life to their futures. We are confident that the research available to us demonstrates that standardised packaging will have a positive impact on health and that it is a proportionate and justified measure.

We hope that Ireland's example in enacting legislating against tobacco use can show the way to others. While there have been remarkable achievements in the fight against tobacco use, there is a long way to go. We must all stand strong in our commitment to the Convention and in supporting the Secretariat to continue its critical work in helping States Parties fulfil their obligations. We should celebrate ten years, certainly, but also steel ourselves for the road ahead and move forward with determination to fill the gaps in implementation of the Convention as we continue to strive for a healthier future.

ENDS