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## **THE WHO IGNORES THE VOICES OF 20 MILLION SUCCESSFUL EX-SMOKERS**

**INNCO, a new alliance of safer nicotine consumer organisations is launched to demand consultation by global regulators. Safer nicotine products save lives. It is time for the WHO to acknowledge human rights and support informed choices for better health.**

The International Network of Nicotine Consumer Organisations (INNCO), a ground-breaking global consumer advocacy network representing over 20 million former smokers worldwide, is being launched today.

The network brings together leading advocacy organisations from over fifteen countries to pursue a set of common objectives. INNCO's mission is to make it easier for smokers to obtain safer alternatives to cigarettes, which are the leading preventable cause of disease and death in the world.

"While combustible tobacco is still the most common (and often lethal) way to use nicotine recreationally, that's changing quickly," said New Zealand spokesperson Nancy Sutthoff. "Electronic cigarettes and snus offer consumers far safer alternatives to combustible tobacco and unlike conventional nicotine replacement therapy, consumers enjoy them." (Snus is a low-risk smokeless tobacco product widely used in Sweden, a country that boasts the lowest rates of smoking and tobacco related disease in Europe.)

INNCO stresses that smoking-related diseases kill approximately six million people each year, and anything that can reduce this terrible toll should be welcomed. E-cigarettes, in particular, are a game changer. Public Health England and the Royal College of Physicians consider them unlikely to exceed 5% of the risk of combustible cigarettes.

Among INNCO's priorities is to demand an end to the prohibition, disproportionate regulation, and punitive taxation of safer nicotine products like e-cigarettes and snus. The network seeks a dialogue with the World Health Organisation (WHO) over its opposition to e-cigarettes and other safer ways to use nicotine – an issue which INNCO believes is fuelling a rising tide of resentment towards the UN health agency.

INNCO is concerned that the WHO has shown a generally negative response to e-cigarettes since their introduction. Despite the increasing wealth of scientific evidence which supports their unique potential for harm reduction, the WHO tends to ignore the positives and selectively focus on unsubstantiated fears.

The WHO seventh Conference of the Parties (CoP7) to the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), will take place in Delhi, India next month and INNCO believes it is likely that the organisation will seek to entrench their prohibitionist stance yet further. The CoP7 agenda contains several proposals which, if enacted, would make it even harder for current users or smokers wishing to switch to access e-cigarettes, or use them in public places.

INNCO finds the WHO's refusal to engage with the most important stakeholders concerning consumers who actually use reduced-risk nicotine products, and therefore ignoring them

throughout the decision-making process contradicts the UN and WHO advice to engage with affected communities.

At previous meetings, the press was dismissed from the proceedings after the opening statements were completed. INNCO worries the WHO has normalized secrecy, with the conference amounting to little more than a biennial lesson on how to avoid transparency.

On 2nd October, INNCO wrote to Margaret Chan, Chairman of The World Health Organisation, enclosing its response to the WHO FCTC CoP7 report 'Electronic Nicotine Delivery Systems and Electronic Non-Nicotine Delivery Systems (ENDS/ENNDS)' and formally requested a meeting to discuss our concerns over increasing disproportionate global regulation. INNCO has yet to receive a response.

Steering the development of the network is Judy Gibson, an experienced consumer advocate from the United Kingdom. "INNCO intends to be in the vanguard of a global harm reduction revolution," she stated. "We are a conduit for the most influential nicotine consumer advocate organisations across the world but we also represent the disenfranchised; those who face state prosecution simply because they made an informed choice to stop inhaling deadly smoke and switch to something much safer."

Gibson added, "Over 20 million people are estimated to be using safer nicotine products - and INNCO intends to ensure that their voices are heard. '*Nothing about us without us*' - it's now time to start talking."

## **END**

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Notes to editors:

1. INNCO MASTER RESPONSE TO THE WHO COP 7 REPORT  
<http://www.innco.org/published-documents>
2. INNCO BACKGROUND - AVAILABLE FROM WEBSITE INNCO.ORG  
<http://www.innco.org/about-us>
3. PRESS RELEASE DOCUMENT will be made available to the general public on our website starting Monday October 10<sup>th</sup> CET 12.00

AS AN INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATION WE ARE HAPPY TO HAVE SPOKESPEOPLE AVAILABLE FOR INTERVIEW IN A RANGE OF LANGUAGES: ENGLISH, FRENCH, SPANISH, TURKISH, DUTCH, GERMAN AND SWEDISH

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