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ASIA EDITION

Policymakers pledge to strengthen tobacco control & prevention of NCDs

December 10, 2018 | News

The summit was hosted under the aegis of the Asia Pacific Cities Alliance for Tobacco Control and Prevention of Noncommunicable Disease [AP-CAT], the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union) and The Ministry of Health, Indonesia



Subnational leaders, mayors, government officials and civil society members gathered at the 3rd Asia Pacific Cities Alliance for Tobacco Control and NonCommunicable Diseases Prevention Summit pledged to redouble their efforts at enforcing tobacco control and prevent related noncommunicable diseases.

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The summit hosted in Singapore from December 4-6, agreed on a call for action that covers three board areas:

- **Implement World Health Organization (WHO) best buys for NCDs control and prevention**; i) reduce tobacco use; ii) reduce harmful use of alcohol; iii) reduce unhealthy diet; iv) reduce physical inactivity; v) manage cardiovascular disease and diabetes; vi) manage cancer; vii) manage Chronic Respiratory disease
- **Implement tobacco control best buys;**
  Create a 100% smoke-free environment in public places, work places and public transport. And encourage family to create smokefree home and social events.
  2. Ban tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship
  3. Support for national governments to increase the size of pictorial health warnings with a provision for plain packaging
  4. Support national government to raise taxes on tobacco products
  5. Prevent tobacco industry interferences to safe guard people's health from the influence of the tobacco industry
  6. Create tobacco free generation as an endgame for tobacco
  7. Establish and expand country level alliance of subnational leaders
- Measure and evaluate progress, so that interventions are implemented, and progress can be monitored.

Representatives from Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam, Philippines, Myanmar, Malaysia, Timor Leste, Laos, Cambodia, Nepal, Bangladesh and India met December 4 to 6 to discuss how best to overcome the considerable

challenges to tobacco control in the region, which has some of the highest smoking rates in the world. Earlier, Senior Minister of State for Law & Health, Singapore, Mr Edwin Tong, had delivered the opening address at the inaugural session on December 4.

AP-CAT was formed in 2016 to create a network and forum for subnational leaders working to advance tobacco control and NCD prevention. Smoke-free public places, advertising bans and policy support to national governments improving taxation on tobacco and other harmful products are within their remit. The AP-CAT membership has increased to 40 in 2018 from 12 in 2016.

"Mayors and regional leaders can have a direct and positive impact on the lives of millions through good city-level governance. Tobacco control policies introduced and well-enforced at this level can become a powerful force for national change," said **Dr Tara Singh Bam, Deputy Regional Director for The Union Asia Pacific**. 'Subnational leaders can play a central role in reducing rates of non-communicable disease by ensuring public services are managed with protection of public health as a priority."

Subnational leaders play a key role in managing the day-to-day environments and infrastructures that affect those living in urban areas. Smoke-free policies and bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship are within the jurisdiction of mayors. Comprehensive and well-enforced measures help smokers to quit, and vitally, prevent young people from taking up the habit. At present, tobacco companies are successfully recruiting new generations of smokers throughout the Asia Pacific region, with highly targeted marketing campaigns.

"The discussions at the summit were very informative. Data driven insights and sharing of best practices have definitely provided us with more ideas to implement the tobacco control measures and make them acceptable to the millennials, **Dr. Bima Arya, Mayor of Bogor City Indonesia and Co-Chair, AP-CAT.**

Speaking on the occasion**, Mr Francis Anthony S Garcia, Mayor of Balanga City, Philippines and Co-Chair, AP-CAT**, said "This Alliance displays a strong regional political commitment that prioritises the health of people above the demands of multinational corporations. We are seeking to expand its reach to more cities to drive tobacco control forward across Asia Pacific."

It was also decided on the occasion that the 2019 summit will be hosted in Bogor City, Indonesia. The initiative which started in 2016 has been hosted in Singapore for the past three years.