

31 May 2011

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Joseph Deiss,
President of the 65th Session of the General Assembly,
at the Luncheon on the occasion of World Tobacco Day**

Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

“Smoking kills”. “Smoking seriously harms you and others around you”. “Quitting smoking now greatly reduces risks to your health”.

In spite of these many warnings that you can find on cigarette packs in various countries, in spite of persistent campaigning against tobacco use, there is still more than one billion smokers in the world today and total consumption of tobacco products keeps increasing, mostly in the poorest countries.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Tobacco use is the second cause of death worldwide. Tobacco addiction has huge human, social and economic costs.

It is the poor who smoke the most, compounding the negative impacts of tobacco use. Limited family resources are spent on tobacco instead of essential needs such as food, schooling and nutrition.

Tobacco kills many people in their economically productive years. Families are losing their breadwinners and nations are being deprived of healthy workforces. The most vulnerable bear the heaviest burden of poverty and disease from tobacco.

It is our collective responsibility to help countries and their people fight this global addiction. In so doing, we must keep in mind that for some poor countries, growing tobacco is a major source of export revenues. Therefore, we must support structural change in these countries and the shift of their farmers to other crops.

This year, the theme for World No Tobacco Day is “The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control”. This Convention is the world’s foremost tobacco control instrument. It reaffirms the rights of all people to the highest standard of health, it provides new legal dimensions for cooperation in tobacco control and it sets high standards for compliance.

Since its adoption in 2003 and entry into force in 2005, the Convention has become one of the most rapidly and widely embraced treaties in the history of the United Nations. Today, 173 States are parties to the Convention.

We must make this Convention a reality. International cooperation and coordination for the implementation of the treaty is one of its major features. One important follow-up is to integrate the Convention into the United Nations Development Assistance Framework, at the country level and as part of a single United Nations strategy.

The Secretary-General called for this to be done last year in his report to the substantive session of ECOSOC. I echo his call. The integration of the Convention in country programs and activities will contribute to making a real difference on the ground.

The General Assembly will hold a High-level meeting on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases this September in New York. The first of its kind, this meeting will focus on developmental challenges of prevention and control of NCDs, and their social and economic impacts, in particular for developing countries. The WHO Framework Convention is as an important tool for prevention. It can certainly provide useful lessons in the prevention of other diseases.

I call on all stakeholders – governments, civil society, people living with non-communicable diseases, and the private sector, to engage constructively to make the 2011 High-level meeting a milestone in our fight against NCDs, including tobacco-related illnesses.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Many NCDs, like tobacco addiction, are preventable. This we must not forget. We must resolutely join forces and step up our fight against tobacco use. Not smoking is the best behavior. It is the most immediately rewarding and effective thing that we can do to protect our own health and the health of people around us.