

CANADIAN CANCER SOCIETY ♦ CANADIAN COUNCIL ON TOBACCO CONTROL ♦
CANADIAN DENTAL ASSOCIATION ♦ CANADIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION ♦
CANADIAN NURSES ASSOCIATION ♦ CANADIAN PHARMACISTS ASSOCIATION ♦
CANADIAN PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION ♦ HEART AND STROKE FOUNDATION OF
CANADA ♦ PHYSICIANS FOR A SMOKE-FREE CANADA ♦ THE LUNG ASSOCIATION

May 31, 2005

A World No Tobacco Day Message from Canada's Health Professionals

(Ottawa) – The number of tobacco-caused deaths around the world will double from 5 million to 10 million a year by the year 2020, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

On the first World No Tobacco Day since the international Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (the FCTC) came into force, leading Canadian health agencies are calling on the federal government to articulate how Canada will help developing countries protect their citizens from tobacco industry products.

Since 1987, the World Health Organization has observed this day to draw global attention to the tobacco epidemic and the preventable death and disease caused by tobacco use. The theme set by the WHO for this year is the role of health professionals.

“Health professionals know too well the devastating impact that tobacco use has on health – we see the consequences of smoking every day,” said Dr. Albert Schumacher, President of the Canadian Medical Association. “We also see the improvements when governments introduce strong and effective measures to reduce tobacco use. That’s why we are so determined to see Canada do more to support such measures in the developing world where smoking rates are increasing.” More than 70% of the projected tobacco-caused deaths will be concentrated in poorer nations whose health systems are already over-burdened.

“More than two years have elapsed since the FCTC was unanimously adopted by the World Health Organization, and six months have passed since Canada ratified the treaty” said Ken Kyle, Director of Public Issues for the Canadian Cancer Society, “yet the government has still not shared its plans to support the treaty. The Government of Canada must uphold its commitment, develop these plans and put them in place.”

The FCTC is a much-praised response by the member states of the World Health Organization to the spread of tobacco from wealthy countries to the developing world. This unique public health treaty came into force in February 2005, and has already been ratified by 66 countries (including Canada). Through this treaty, these nations have committed to comprehensive tobacco control policies like ending tobacco promotions, ensuring large health warnings are on all tobacco products, protecting the public from

second hand smoke, and helping smokers quit. They have also promised to help each other on these and other important tobacco control measures, including trans-boundary issues like cross-border advertising and smuggling controls.

“Over 5 million Canadians currently use tobacco, increasing their risk for developing heart disease, stroke and other chronic diseases,” says Sally Brown, CEO of the Heart and Stroke Foundation. “We need to keep working to get these numbers down, and to help other countries do the same.”

“Canada played a pivotal role in the development of this treaty and offered both financial and technical support during the negotiation process,” noted Dr Elinor Wilson, CEO of the Canadian Public Health Association. “That’s why it is so important that we continue our leadership. Many countries will be unable to properly implement the treaty unless they receive support to counter the tobacco industry, to prepare and enforce new legislation, to train their health professionals and to educate their public.”

Among the measures the Canadian groups are seeking are financial support to global tobacco control, a high standard of implementation of the FCTC in Canada and support for independent treaty monitoring.

“As a precedent in treaty-making, the Framework Convention is a great achievement, and a legacy of global collaboration,” said Dr. Atul Kapur, President of Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada. “But it will only save lives if countries like Canada commit the resources to making it work.”

-30-

Contacts:

Cynthia Callard, Physicians for a Smoke-Free Canada (613) 233 4878

Carole Lavigne, Canadian Medical Association, 1 (800) 663-7336 ext 1266