

International Pharmaceutical Students' Federation

Agenda 8.4- Regional Strategic Framework for combating smokeless tobacco, novel nicotine products and areca nut in the WHO South-East Asia Region

International Pharmaceutical Students' Federation Asia Pacific Regional Office (IPSF APRO), representing over 35,000 pharmacy students and recent graduates from 10 member organisations across 6 countries in the WHO South-East Asia Region, and more than 70,000 collectively in the Asia Pacific region.

Tobacco use remains the leading modifiable risk factor for noncommunicable diseases and premature deaths worldwide, with the South-East Asia Region accounting for over 80% of global smokeless tobacco users. Misconceptions of smokeless tobacco as a harm reduction product undermine progress and encourage use. Despite FCTC and MPOWER efforts, the Region still faces a heavy burden of smokeless tobacco, novel nicotine products, and areca nut use, compounded by weak enforcement, regulatory gaps, and low public awareness.

IPSF APRO has actively advanced tobacco control through the publication of a policy paper and a tobacco cessation booklet in 2020, as well as by leading regional World No Tobacco Day campaigns in 2020 and 2023. Building on these efforts, we continue our work today to strengthen the role of pharmacists in tobacco and nicotine cessation, as accessible health professionals who educate the public, assess readiness to quit, and provide both behavioural and pharmacological support

We call on the WHO and Member States to:

Strengthen enforcement and close regulatory gaps, including those on online marketing, cross-border trade, and industry interference;

Promote multisectoral collaboration with civil society, community stakeholders, and youth organizations for inclusive tobacco control implementation; and

Establish surveillance systems to monitor the use and marketing of smokeless tobacco, novel nicotine products, and areca nut.

IPSF APRO stands ready to collaborate with all stakeholders to advance decisive action toward a tobacco-free South-East Asia.