

Non Communicable Disease Alliance

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

Regional Strategic Framework for Combating Smokeless Tobacco, Novel Nicotine Products, and Areca Nut

The South-East Asia Regional NCD Alliance welcomes the development of this Regional Strategic Framework – the first of its kind globally – to address smokeless tobacco, novel nicotine products (NNPS), and areca nut. With over 80% of the world's smokeless tobacco users living in this region, and widespread cultural use of areca nut, urgent action is needed to protect public health.

We applaud WHO SEARO for prioritizing this issue. Against the commitment of the political declaration of the 4th High-Level Meeting on NCDs and Mental Health to achieve the global target of 150 million fewer people using tobacco by 2030, we call on Member States to:

- Integrate smokeless tobacco into national tobacco control strategies in line with the WHO FCTC, MPOWER, NCD and SDG targets.
- Adopt strong regulatory measures on all tobacco products, including uniform taxation, plain packaging, and bans on advertising, as well as comprehensive regulation to prevent the promotion of NNPs among children, young people and non-users (such as marketing and point-of-sale restrictions and bans on appealing features, e.g., flavours) and to prevent nicotine addiction and continued/dual use with tobacco.
- Increase investment in cessation programmes and targeted media campaigns, especially for youth and rural communities.
- Build surveillance and testing capacity, generate high-quality disaggregated data, and foster regional cooperation to counter industry interference and illicit and cross-border trade.
- Engage civil society and communities in advocacy, education, and enforcement to ensure healthier lives.

The SEAR NCD Alliance is committed to working alongside governments and WHO to ensure this framework leads to lasting reductions in oral cancer, nicotine addiction, and NCD burden in the region.