



ECOSOC

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TOBACCO CONTROL IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Introduction and History

The Economic and Social Council is dedicated to solving the world's problems related to economic growth, protecting the environment, and increasing the health of the world's population. One of the most pressing issues is tobacco control, especially in developing countries where the balance between economic growth and the health of the population must both be carefully considered.

In the history of the world, tobacco is one of the most prevalent and widely used drugs, with over one billion users of tobacco in the world[1]. Tobacco is also a very popular crop for farmers, especially in developing countries; over 7 million tons of tobacco is produced each year.

On July 24, 2012, after creating the Ad Hoc Inter-Agency Task Force on Tobacco Control, the U.N. passed Resolution 2012/4, the U.N. System-wide Coherence on Tobacco Control, which concerns the amount of tobacco production and sales in the world[2]. The resolution recognizes the adverse effects of tobacco consumption on public health, the environment, and efforts to reduce poverty; the resolution also recognizes the effect tobacco use has on the prevalence of non-communicable diseases in the world. The resolution mentions the inherent conflict of interest between tobacco corporations and public health. Taking these into consideration, the resolution encourages groups to be involved with public outreach, especially in regard to the prevention of non-communicable diseases.

Health issues

There are many health issues associated with the consumption of tobacco products. Smoking or otherwise ingesting tobacco increases the chance of having a non-communicable disease, including heart attack, stroke, lung cancer, coronary heart disease; tobacco ingestion in a pregnant woman can also contribute to birth defects. In the U.S. and Canada, around 23 percent of men die due to a tobacco-related cause. In Russia, this figure hovers around 28 percent[3].

Worldwide, 5.4 million people die each year from tobacco-related causes[4].

Given that the majority of tobacco consumed in the world is smoked, secondhand smoke must also be considered. Secondhand smoke is a major issue, especially in developing countries with high rates of tobacco usage.

Importantly, secondhand smoke is not simply an annoyance to the nonsmoker; it can cause disease and death in the nonsmokers.

Nonsmokers can develop bronchitis, heart disease, asthma attacks, and respiratory problems, especially if exposed to smoke at an early age. Around 50,000 secondhand-smoking related deaths occur each year in the U.S.[5], where 12 percent of youth live in a secondhand smoke environment[6]. The number of children living in secondhand smoke environments is higher in Eastern European and Asian countries: around 50 percent in China, the Philippines, Cambodia, and Thailand; around 60 percent in Indonesia and Mongolia; around 70 percent in Ukraine and Kazakhstan, and 76 percent in Russia.

Finally, tobacco use causes lost productivity in countries with high amounts of consumers.[7]

Economic Growth

Tobacco farming is popular among farmers, as it garners higher profits than other crops that can be grown in the same conditions. Tobacco can be farmed in poorer soil than other cash crops, further encouraging farmers to invest in growing the plant. Developing countries have very high rates of tobacco production. In fact, eight of the top ten tobacco-producing countries in the world are developing countries: including China, Russia, India, Indonesia, and Brazil, Zimbabwe, and Malawi[8]. These countries, as well as the U.S. and the European Union, make large profits from growing tobacco; in Brazil, around 3 percent of the population is somehow involved in tobacco farming and processing. In Malawi, nearly 25 percent of the population is employed in the tobacco process[9]. The tobacco farming and processing in developing countries can have a profound impact on the economic situation of the communities involved. Growing tobacco can increase infrastructure, improve access to education, and better the livelihood of those who grow tobacco.[10]

Possible country blocs and positions

Economic

The majority of the countries most invested in tobacco cultivation and development are low-income countries. These countries are more active in protesting policies that limit

the amount of tobacco produced. If tobacco production were to be limited, many farmers and workers in these countries would have no way of earning a livelihood, and economic growth in the country would be greatly stymied.

Social

Some of the highest rates of tobacco usage per capita in the world occur in Russia, China, Kazakhstan, the U.S., Canada, and the European Union. In total consumption, China holds the title for largest amount of tobacco consumed annually, followed by Japan, the U.S., Indonesia, and Russia. These countries' public health would greatly improve with more regulation of tobacco sale and consumption, but many of these countries- especially the U.S.- depend on revenue from taxes of tobacco in order to fund education and other governmental programs[11]. Thus, the countries with large per capita and total consumption of tobacco products would be more in favor of reaching a resolution that restrains the sale of tobacco products, except if those restraints also lower overall tax revenue for the country. Additionally, some countries with high tobacco usage rates have smoking ingrained in their culture, thus causing more difficulty in creating tobacco legislation[12].

Conclusion

Overall, the regulation of tobacco consumption in the world, and especially in developing countries, is a major issue. Tobacco-producing countries, especially those that are growing economically, rely on tobacco for economic growth and stability of income for the farmers who grow the tobacco.

Additionally, tobacco is a large part of society in many countries, creating more difficulties in legislating against the consumption of tobacco products.

As delegates in ECOSOC, consider how you will do the following:

- Best represent your country's economic interests
- Hold in the balance the health of your nation and neighbor nations
- Work with other countries to reach a conclusion on the best way to regulate the production of tobacco to decrease the negative health effects of tobacco use in the world while keeping intact the positive economic growth associated with the farming and production of tobacco.

When doing your research, consider the following:

- What is the prevalence of tobacco use in your country?
- What is the prevalence of tobacco production in your country?
- What are social and economic costs of tobacco use in your country?
- What are the social and economic benefits of tobacco use in your country?
- Are there policies in your country concerning tobacco use?
- Are there tobacco lobbies in your country?
- Are there countries in a similar situation as yours?

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