



PRESS RELEASE

Prevent future cancer deaths, protect youth from tobacco industry manipulation

Geneva, 30 May 2024 – In support of World No Tobacco Day on 31 May, the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) is calling for urgent action to protect young people from the predatory tactics of the tobacco industry, and its efforts to oppose responsible anti-tobacco legislation wherever possible.

Tobacco use is responsible for approximately 25% of all cancer deaths globally, 85% of all lung cancer deaths. This amounts to an estimated 2.5 million deaths annually, which could otherwise be prevented.

Despite a decline in global tobacco use from 1.36 billion in 2000 to about 1.25 billion users aged 15 and older, the decrease is less substantial than hoped. [More than 38 million young people](#) aged between 13 and 15 are using some form of tobacco.

The tobacco industry's [misuse and abuse of science](#), its [opposition to anti-tobacco laws](#), its attempts to [influence public health debates](#), and its [aggressive marketing of harmful products](#), seriously undermine public health efforts.

“The tobacco industry spends billions to relentlessly target young adults to recruit them as lifelong consumers to replace those who have smoked themselves to an early death. We must protect young people from these harmful products and help them understand the degree to which they are being influenced by companies that are concerned not with their health but only by profits.”

– **Prof. Jeff Dunn AO**, President of UICC, Chief of Mission and Head of Research at the Prostate Cancer Foundation of Australia

The tobacco industry portfolio of new nicotine products includes e-cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snus, and nicotine pouches. These products are often portrayed, [on social media and other platforms popular with youth](#), as fashionable and safe alternatives to traditional cigarettes, despite the growing evidence about the health harms associated with these products, the potential for lifelong nicotine addiction, and the higher risk of smoking and dependency overall.

Big Tobacco's use of digital platforms allows them to [bypass laws banning the promotion of tobacco products](#) according to [WHO's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control](#). The billions spent on direct and indirect advertising continues to normalise tobacco use and make it appear glamorous and socially acceptable.

[Youth advocate Elvina Majiwa highlighted](#) in a recent UICC blog that despite advertising bans, tobacco companies in Kenya exploit loopholes by leveraging influencers to market nicotine pouches to young people and sponsoring high-profile music concerts and sporting events.

UICC advocates for stringent controls on the marketing of new nicotine products, increased taxation on tobacco products, and the development of smoke-free areas to protect youth from second-hand smoke. Additionally, UICC supports the implementation of comprehensive tobacco control measures as outlined in the World Health Organization's Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC).

In a recent podcast with UICC CEO Cary Adams, [youth activists Agamroop Kaur and David Planas Maluenda discussed](#) how the tobacco industry uses social media influencers to promote vaping products, making them appear attractive and safe to young people. To counter this, they suggested anti-tobacco campaigns should use peer-to-peer education and influencers to spread health-positive messages.

"The tobacco industry's tactics are ruthless and manipulative. They fuel high rates of tobacco use among young adults, directly exposing them to increased cancer risks. This undermines efforts to reduce the number of people who develop cancer and die of it. We owe it to the next generation to protect them from tobacco products by implementing and enforcing robust tobacco control policies."

– **Ulrika Årehed Kågström**, President-elect of UICC and Secretary-General of the Swedish Cancer Society

About UICC

The Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) is the largest and oldest international cancer organisation. Founded in 1933, UICC has over 1,100 member organisations in 170 countries and territories.

UICC enjoys consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and has official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). It has over 60 partners, including associations, companies and foundations committed to taking action against cancer.

UICC is a founding member of the NCD Alliance, the McCabe Centre for Law & Cancer and the International Cancer Control Partnership (ICCP). UICC established the City Cancer Challenge Foundation in January 2019 and the Access to Oncology Medicines (ATOM) Coalition in 2022.

UICC's mission is to both unite and support the cancer community in its efforts to reduce the global cancer burden, promote greater equity and ensure that cancer control remains a priority on the global health and development agenda. It pursues these goals by bringing together global leaders through innovative and far-reaching cancer-control events and initiatives, building capacities to meet regional needs and developing awareness campaigns.

More information is available at: www.uicc.org.

