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The Minister of Labour, Health and Social
Affairs of Georgia
Ministry of Labour, Health and Social
Affairs 114, Tsereteli Avenue
Tbilisi 119
Géorgie

03 April 2018

Sir,

I have the honour to request your continued support to the World Health Organization's (WHO) tobacco control work. Tobacco use is one of the world's leading preventable causes of death.

Every year tobacco kills over 7 million people globally. The cost of smoking alone – including health expenditures and productivity losses – is estimated at over US\$ 1.4 trillion annually, or 1.8% of the world's gross domestic product.

The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), to which your country is a Party, is one of the best defences we have against tobacco and the industry which promotes it. But we need to ensure the Convention is fully implemented for it to have maximum impact.

I congratulate you on the commitments your country has made to date. But there is more which could be done. We must focus our efforts on the areas where there is still the greatest potential for gains. Two of these are increasing tobacco taxes and stopping the illegal trade of tobacco products.

Increasing tobacco taxes represents a win-win strategy, since it reduces demand whilst increasing government revenue. The Addis Ababa Action Agenda recognized that tobacco taxes represent a funding stream for financing health and broader development in many countries. By raising taxes, you are simultaneously protecting people, avoiding tobacco-related health expenditures, and increasing funding for other national programmes in health and beyond.

cc: Permanent Mission of Georgia to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations at Geneva

The WHO Head of Country Office WHO Country Office

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We must also stop the illegal trade of tobacco. Illicit trade undermines tobacco control, reduces government revenue and fosters organized crime. The WHO FCTC Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products was developed in 2012, as a direct response to illicit trade in tobacco products. As we strive to ensure the Protocol's entry into force to achieve its objectives, it is my hope that your Government will become a Party to the Illicit Trade Protocol in 2018.

We are convinced that Georgia's ratification will help catalyse 40 ratifications before the 2 July 2018. This would permit the Protocol to enter into force and the 1st Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol to be hosted after the eighth session of the Conference of Parties to the WHO FCTC in October 2018.

These actions can help save millions of lives and move the world closer to the Sustainable Development Goals. Tobacco control will be a key topic at the 2018 United Nations High-level Meeting on Noncommunicable Diseases (NCDs) in New York. The two measures outlined here will help the global community meet its commitment to reduce deaths from noncommunicable diseases, for which tobacco is a major risk factor.

The WHO Country Representative is available to meet with you to explore how we can advance this work in the near future. We hope to see concrete progress fighting NCDs between now and 2018 UN High-level meeting on NCDs.

To continue to make progress against one of the world's biggest preventable killers, we must combine our efforts. I urge you to join me in making this happen and saving the lives of millions of people.

Please accept Sir, the assurance of my highest consideration.



Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
Director-General