

**MESSAGE OF WHO REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR AFRICA, DR LUIS G. SAMBO,
ON THE OCCASION OF WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY 2012**

This year the theme for World No Tobacco Day is: "Tobacco industry interference." The interference by the tobacco industry and its allies in the process of developing and implementing tobacco control policies is a matter of great concern. Attempts to undermine the scientific evidence on the harmful effects of tobacco on health are not acceptable.

There is evidence of increasing use of tobacco, particularly among girls. Tobacco use kills nearly six million people each year, and of these more than 600,000 are people exposed to second-hand smoke.¹ In fact, tobacco kills up to one half of all users and remains one of the leading preventable causes of death. Since tobacco has no known health benefit but on the contrary, causes diseases, disability and premature death, the tobacco industry cannot be a stakeholder in improving public health.

Article 5.3 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) obligates Parties to the Convention to protect their tobacco control policies from tobacco industry interference. For effective tobacco control, countries are engaging other sectors to implement the WHO FCTC as part of the development agenda.

Today, as we observe World No Tobacco Day 2012, I would like to draw attention to the urgent need for countries to take concrete steps to implement the WHO FCTC and ensure that the public is fully aware of the negative health consequences of smoking and second-hand smoke. In formulating and implementing public policies, decision makers are called upon to ensure that these policies are protected from the vested interests of the tobacco industry.

The public and the private sectors, as well as the civil society in general, all have a role to play in designing and implementing intersectoral programmes and strategies for tobacco control. They also need to raise awareness on the negative impact of tobacco use on health, environment and socio-economic development.

As we commemorate World No Tobacco Day, let us strengthen our efforts to protect the health of the people by raising awareness about the negative health effects of tobacco use and the interference from the tobacco industry.

Between tobacco and health, the choice is clear!

Thank you.

¹ WHO. Global Health Risks: Mortality and burden of disease attributable to selected major risks. Geneva, World Health Organization, 2009.