

## **REGIONAL INITIATIVE TEMPLATE**

Please complete each section below.

### **1. Contact Details**

Please provide the following contact details:

<b>Name of individual or group submitting initiative</b>	<b>The Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)</b>
<b>Name and position of primary contact</b>	Dr Colin Tukuitonga, Director General
<b>Email address</b>	<a href="mailto:Colint@spc.int">Colint@spc.int</a>
<b>Alternate email address</b>	<a href="mailto:Patriciasc@spc.int">Patriciasc@spc.int</a>
<b>Phone number</b>	(+687) 26 01 24
<b>Fax number</b>	(+687) 26 20 00
<b>Mailing address</b>	SPC, B. P. D5 – 98848, Noumea Cedex, New Caledonia

### **2. Name of Initiative**

**Tobacco Free Pacific 2025 - Healthy Islands are Tobacco Free Islands**

### **3. Background and Rationale**

*You may consider: What is the issue being addressed by this initiative? What are the causes of this issue? Are there relevant studies that have been carried out to support the issue? Are there links to national, regional or international goals/policies?*

**Please limit your response to no more than 750 words.**

Non Communicable Diseases (NCDs) are a significant obstacle to Pacific Islands Countries and Territories achieving their development potential. Sadly, PICTs are renowned worldwide in the Health sphere for all the wrong reasons - the most obese nations (the top 10 are PICTs), highest prevalence of diabetes (the top 10 are PICTs), among the highest rates of smoking especially for women and it is estimated that up to 80% of premature deaths are attributable to NCDs. In the 70's, less than 10% of adults had diabetes in all PICTs. In the few countries that have done surveys since 2010, all show more than 30% having diabetes with the highest at 49%.

The NCD epidemic has not spared any of the PICTs and unfortunately the evidence indicates that while some may be improving, it is likely to get worse before it gets better for many PICTs.

Its effect is not limited to the Health sector in terms of direct costs but also extends to social effects by worsening poverty through increased costs to sufferers and caregivers having to miss out of time at work or school. The economic effects are well documented and many PICTs struggle to provide even basic requirements such as medications and lab tests for NCDs.

Unfortunately the determinants of health outcomes are mostly outside of the health sector. These include other sectors such as Economics and Finance, Trade, Agriculture and Fisheries, Justice and Legislative mechanisms and Infrastructure Development. A multi-sectoral approach is therefore critical in order for NCDs to begin to be addressed adequately.

The Pacific Health Ministers Meeting (PHMM) has taken the lead in making commitments to addressing NCDs over the years. Collaborations with other sectors have been gaining momentum and in 2014, the first Joint Forum Economic Minister and Pacific Health Ministers Meeting was held in Honiara and endorsed the Pacific Non Communicable Diseases Roadmap. Other sectors that have included NCDs in their ministerial meeting discussions include Agriculture, Fisheries, Education and Trade.

The Pacific Leaders in their meeting in Auckland in 2011 also supported the emphasis and need to address NCDs effectively.

The four risk factors for NCDs are tobacco use, unhealthy diet, alcohol misuse and physical inactivity. Of these, tobacco use is the most preventable of the leading causes of death and disease in the Pacific including cancers, diabetes, cardiovascular and respiratory disease. Addressing tobacco use through tobacco control measures have the potential to make a significant difference in improving outcomes from NCDs. In addition, tobacco control interventions often require multi-sectoral approaches.

In 2013, the PHMM endorsed the Tobacco Free Pacific 2025 goal of less than 5% current tobacco use prevalence among adults by 2025.. It is worth noting that this is a Pacific specific target and reaches beyond the global voluntary NCD target of a 30% reduction in tobacco use by 2025.

While many PICTs have put in place mechanisms to address tobacco control, there is still much room for improvement and this initiative has the potential to showcase the success of political will and implementation of policies to improve health.

The mechanism for implementation will be through the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) , an international public health treaty that all PICTs have ratified as well as the Pacific NCD Roadmap endorsed by the Joint Forum Economic Ministers and Pacific Health Ministers Meeting in July 2014.

THE WHO FCTC entered into force in 2005 is comprised of articles that cover measures aimed at reducing both supply and demand for tobacco products. The WHO identified a set of specific measures to progress compliance with WHO FCTC namely: **Monitor** tobacco use and prevention policies - focuses on collection and management of tobacco and tobacco control related data to inform good decision making. **Protect** people from tobacco smoke - focuses on prohibiting smoking in public places and protection from second-hand smoke. **Offer** help to quit tobacco use - focuses on assisting current smokers to overcome their addiction and dependence on tobacco. **Warn** about the dangers of tobacco - focuses on warning of the dangers of tobacco use and exposure on tobacco packaging and at points of sale. **Enforce** bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship - focuses on bringing about a total ban on direct and indirect advertising, promotion and sponsorship. **Raise** taxes on tobacco - focuses on taxation measures to increase the price of tobacco.

#### 4. Description

*Please provide a brief overview of this initiative. Try to address the following: Does this initiative contribute to a positive change to the region? What makes this initiative of importance to the Pacific region as a whole? Who would implement this initiative? Who are the main beneficiaries? Are regulatory or legislative changes required at the national level to implement this initiative? How would the initiative be funded? Has this initiative been carried out previously? What are the key risks in implementing this initiative? Are there any complementary projects and programmes currently active? What is the proposed timeframe for this initiative? How would the initiative be sustained over the proposed timeframe?*

**Please limit your response to no more than 750 words.**

### **Tobacco Free Pacific 2025 - Healthy Islands are Tobacco Free Islands**

Tobacco Free Pacific 2025 (TFP2025) is an initiative endorsed by the PHMM in 2013 and launched in 2014 and supported by the 22 PICTs. The technical support for the initiative is primarily provided by the WHO and SPC as well as assistance from other partners.

The ultimate goal is help reduce the NCD burden by attaining a target of <5% current tobacco use among adults by 2025.

The Pacific NCD Roadmap identified tobacco control as its first priority with the recommendation to decrease the affordability of tobacco products to thereby reduce demand for them by raising taxes on tobacco products –preferably using an excise tax to achieve a proportion of at least 70% of the retail price. Tax measures to increase the price of tobacco has been shown to be one of the most effective ways to encourage smokers to quit as well as discouraging non-smokers (especially young people) from starting. Most of these actions are national, and as part of the Pacific NCD Roadmap, PICTs are encouraged to develop their own country specific roadmap to facilitate implementation of their activities. The main stakeholders in PICTs for this initiative include Prime Minister’s Office, Ministries of Finance, Revenue, Justice, Health, Labour Commerce and Trade and Education.

Legislative measures and policies are required to implement this initiative. Many PICTs already have some form of tobacco control legislation, but require strengthening of implementation and enforcement.

Funding for the initiative will be a combination national funding (including in some cases, revenue collected from the tax measures) as well as assistance from development partners and technical agencies.

Many PICTs have made positive moves to implement recommended actions, but the opportunity to do more can be harnessed if the issue is elevated to the Leaders’ Forum. It provides for opportunities for mutual collaboration with the different sectors within and among PICTs and reduces the issue of national lack of political will.

TFP2025 is an opportunity for the Pacific to show leadership and success in this area of tobacco control and NCDs. It is by design specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and timely. One particular measure for achieving TFP2025 that can only be achieved through a regional approach, is tackling the issue of illicit trade.

Article 15 of the WHO FCTC focuses on actions Parties could take to prevent illicit trade in tobacco products and to provide further strengthen prevention of illicit trade of tobacco products, in 2012, the Conference of Parties of the WHO FCTC approved the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade of Tobacco Products (ITP). The objective of the Protocol is to eliminate of all forms of illicit trade in tobacco products. “Illicit trade” in tobacco products in the context of the Protocol means any practice or conduct related to producing, shipping, receiving, being in possession of, distributing, selling or buying tobacco products and that is prohibited by law.

This article requires a tracking and tracing regime (which will be vital to investigations of illicit trade) to be established in which Parties will establish national/regional tracking and tracing systems. Additionally that cigarette and other tobacco packages bear unique identification markings such as codes or stamps (containing essential information regarding the products).

A tracking and tracing system requires a multisectoral approach particularly among customs, finance and revenue, health, trade, and foreign affairs. It may, also in the Pacific, be far more efficient and effective as a regional approach.

Since many PICTs have made significant progress with increasing tobacco taxes, implementing track and trace systems including mechanisms such as high-tech duty/tax stamps will help customs authorities ensure that proper taxes have been paid on tobacco products.

The main risk for implementation would be interference from the tobacco industry. The tobacco industry claims that high taxes drive smuggling and they lobby governments to keep tobacco taxes low. However, the experience from many countries shows that there is no direct correlation between high taxes and smuggling. Currently, tobacco industry is attempting to interfere with tobacco control by developing its own tracking and tracing system. Since the tobacco industry's interests fundamentally conflict with health, adopting a tracking and tracing system developed by the tobacco industry which likely contain features such as weaknesses about which only the tobacco industry is aware. Therefore market forces cannot be relied on to deal with this problem of illicit trade, a regional government led approach is needed.

A commitment from PICT leaders, an agreement among regional stakeholders, and a costing and feasibility study for developing a regional tracking and tracing system could be developed within 2016.

## 5. Alignment to Regional Vision, Values and Objectives

*Briefly describe how your initiative supports the vision, values and objectives set out in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism. These can be found in the Framework for Pacific Regionalism document or in the submissions guideline document.*

***Please limit your response to no more than 500 words***

"Our Pacific Vision is for a region of peace, harmony, security, social inclusion, and prosperity, so that all Pacific people can lead free, healthy, and productive lives."

Vision of the Framework for Pacific Regionalism

Good health is an important aspect of the Framework's vision. Without Health, achieving the vision and the objectives of the Framework would be more difficult if not impossible.

"We seek peaceful, safe, and stable communities and countries, ensuring full security and wellbeing for the peoples of the Pacific."

Value from the Framework for Pacific Regionalism

Wellbeing (and wellness) is among the principles that PICTs are looking more into achieving as their endeavour to achieve their own goals.

The proposed actions are also in line with supporting good governance, through the potential to improve compliance with national customs laws, and to increase economic development (through improved revenue and reduced burden of NCDs)

## 6. Additional Information

*Please provide or attach additional information in support of this initiative.*

***Please limit your response to no more than 5 pages.***

“The World Bank and the IMF have each endorsed high-tech tax stamps as an essential measure to reduce tobacco product smuggling.” (Source: Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids, January 3, 2013)

According to one study conducted in American Samoa, “even a revenue-neutral tax stamp program would allow [the government] to ensure that all cigarette excise taxes have been paid as well as help improve public health by aiding efforts to reduce the high rate of smoking presently seen in the territory.” (Jackson, B.M. (2011), Report: Feasibility Study of a Cigarette Tax Stamp Program in American Samoa)

The state of California in the United States of America implemented high-tech tax stamps on tobacco products and showed “that additional tax revenues collected using the state’s high-tech stamp could be as much as eight times higher than implementation and administrative costs.” (CDC Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report, 64(20); 541-546.) An equivalent cost-benefit cannot be expected in the Pacific if each country applies its own tracking and tracing system due to the volume differences between the Pacific and California; therefore, conducting a costing and feasibility study is recommended at a regional-level.