



SPEECH BY THE HONOURABLE MINISTER OF HEALTH, FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA PROFESSOR ISAAC ADEWOLE, FAS, FSPSP, FRCOG, DSc(Hons) AT THE PRESS BRIEFING TO MARK THE 2017 WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY HELD AT THE CONFERENCE ROOM OF THE FEDERAL MINISTRY OF HEALTH, ABUJA

ON WEDNESDAY 31ST OF MAY 2017

PROTOCOL

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, I am delighted to address you today as Nigeria again joins the rest of the world to commemorate the 2017 World No Tobacco Day with the theme **"Tobacco a threat to Development"**.

The objectives of this year's event are:

- i. To highlight the links between the use of tobacco products, tobacco control and sustainable development.
- ii. To take proactive measures to include tobacco control in our national responses to 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda.

- iii. To call for efficient synergy between the Governments and Civil Society Organizations in order to combat tobacco industry interference in political processes that will lead to stronger national tobacco control action.
- iv. To encourage broader public and partner participation in national, regional and global efforts to develop and implement development strategies and plans and achieve goals that prioritize action on tobacco control.
- v. To demonstrate how individuals can contribute to making a sustainable, tobacco-free world, either by committing to never taking up tobacco products, or by quitting the habit.

2. The theme for this year's World No Tobacco Day focuses on a germane issue. Tobacco control has been enshrined in the Sustainable Development Agenda because it is one of the most effective means to help achieve Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3 and its target 3.4 and 3.a.

- **SDG 3-** Ensure healthy lives and promote wellbeing for all age.
- **SDG3 target 3.4-** Achieve one-third global reduction of premature deaths from NCDs through prevention and treatment, and promote mental health and wellbeing.

- **SDG3 target 3.a**- Strengthen the implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) in all Countries as appropriate.

3. Tobacco control can also help break the cycle of poverty, contribute to ending hunger, promote sustainable agriculture and economic growth, and combat climate change. Increasing taxes and levies on tobacco products can also reduce its consumption and secondarily generate revenue which can be used to finance universal health coverage and other developmental health programs.

4. Facts from WHO showed that tobacco use costs national economies immensely, this is through increased health-care costs and decreased productivity. It also worsens health inequalities and exacerbates poverty, as the poorest people spend less on essentials such as food, education and health care.

5. Tobacco is the only legal drug that kills many of its users when used exactly as intended by manufacturers. WHO has estimated that tobacco use is currently responsible for the death of about 6 million people annually across the world with 80% of these deaths occurring in low and middle-income countries like Nigeria. This includes about 600,000 people who are also estimated to die from the effects of

second-hand smoke. Many of these deaths occur prematurely. Although often associated with ill-health, disability and death from chronic non-communicable diseases, tobacco use is also associated with an increased risk of death from communicable diseases.

6. According to Nigeria's 2012 Global Adult Tobacco Survey (GATS) over 20 billion sticks of cigarettes are consumed in Nigeria annually, and 5.6% adults (4.5 million) currently use tobacco products out of which 4.1 million are men and 0.5 million women. In addition, 29.3% of adults (6.4 million) are exposed to second-hand tobacco smoke when visiting restaurants, hotels and other public settings. Of the adults surveyed, 82.4% believe that smoking causes serious illness. Recent study among University Students in Abuja, alarmingly shows that 33.3% of the students are current smokers.

7. Tobacco growing requires large amounts of pesticides and fertilizers, which can be toxic and pollute water supplies. Each year, tobacco growing uses 4.3 million hectares of land, resulting in global deforestation between 2% and 4%. Tobacco manufacturing also produces over 2 million tonnes of solid waste.

8. The global threat from tobacco is frightening. Tackling this menace led to the establishment of the biggest public health treaty known as the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), which is the first treaty negotiated under the auspices of the World Health Organization. The WHO FCTC is an evidence-based treaty that responds to the globalization of the tobacco epidemic and tobacco-related diseases while reaffirming the right of all people to the highest standard of health.

9. In our response to protecting public health, Nigeria signed and ratified the WHO FCTC treaty in 2004 and 2005 respectively. Through the legal mandate of FCTC instruments, the Federal Ministry of Health in collaboration with line Ministries, Department, Agencies and other stakeholders developed the National Tobacco Control Bill which was enacted as the National Tobacco Control Act in May 2015. One of the major objectives of the Act is to protect present and future generations of Nigerian citizens from the devastating health, social, economic and environmental consequences of use of or exposure to tobacco or tobacco products.

10. Distinguished colleagues, ladies and gentlemen, we are not resting on our oars in the tobacco fight. In pursuance with the provision of the Act, I inaugurated the National Tobacco Control Committee (NATOCC) on the 12th of July, 2016 to advise me on tobacco control matters. In line with her mandate, NATOCC produced draft National Tobacco Control Regulations 2017 which I shall soon transmit to the National Assembly for approval as a legal framework for the effective implementation of the National Tobacco Control (NTC) Act 2015. Also, in order to sustain the gains in tobacco control in Nigeria, I recently approved the establishment of the National Tobacco Control Unit (TCU) as required by sections 6 and 7 of the National Tobacco Control (NTC) Act 2015 to drive the plans, policies, projects and programmes of NATOCC and the Federal Ministry of Health.

11. Having carefully analyzed the NTC Act 2015, I wish to announce with high sense of responsibility that Government will begin implementing the following provisions before the end of this year.

- i. Prohibition of sale of tobacco products to and by anyone below 18.
- ii. Ban of sale of cigarettes in single sticks. Cigarettes must be sold in packs of 20 sticks only.
- iii. Smokeless tobacco shall be sold in a minimum of a pack of 30 grams.

- iv. Ban of sale or offer for sale or distribution of tobacco or tobacco products through mail, internet or other online devices
- v. Prohibition of interference of tobacco industry in public health and related issues.
- vi. Prohibition of smoking in anywhere on the premises of a child care facility; educational facility; and health care facility. Other prohibited places for smoking include playgrounds; amusement parks; plazas; public parks; stadium, public transports, restaurants, bars, or other public gathering spaces.
- vii. Prosecution of owner or manager of any of the places listed above, who permits, encourages or fails to stop smoking in the above listed places.
- viii. Prohibition of tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship of any kind.
- ix. Compliance with specified standard for content as set out by Standards Organisation of Nigeria.

I am also directing the Department of Public Health in the Federal Ministry of Health to prepare appropriate messaging which we shall display in conspicuous location in all public institutions. I encourage all private establishments to support us in this laudable initiative. I shall also in few weeks communicate with government

agencies through the office of my colleagues on the need to partner with us in the successful implementation of these provisions.

12. Let me at this juncture appreciate all our partners and other stakeholders who have worked tirelessly in supporting tobacco control efforts. It is my hope that in no distant time, Nigeria would be a global example of countries where tobacco control has been successful.

13. I will like end with a quote by David Byrne (former European Union Commissioner for Health and Consumer) "The true face of tobacco is disease, death and horror- not the glamour and sophistication the pushers in the tobacco industry try to portray".

14. I thank you for your time, and God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.