



Examining the global phase out of nicotine products and its economic implications

Esteemed delegates of WHO SharkMUN 2026,

Welcome to this committee, in which you, delegates, will examine the global health implications of the gradual phasing out of nicotine products and the challenges associated with reducing nicotine dependence worldwide. As governments implement stricter tobacco control measures and explore pathways toward nicotine-free societies, countries must address the health, social, and economic consequences of this transition.

The WHO provides a platform for international cooperation in promoting health and reducing the burden of tobacco-related diseases. Delegates are encouraged to develop evidence-based, equitable, and sustainable policies that support tobacco control efforts, facilitate economic transitions for affected communities, and advance global health outcomes while respecting the diverse circumstances of Member States.

Introduction

The global use of nicotine products, especially cigarettes and vapes, creates major health, economic, and social challenges worldwide. Governments are increasingly considering policies to phase out nicotine products through taxes, age restrictions, advertising bans, and public health campaigns. However, because the tobacco and nicotine industry contributes significantly to employment, trade, and tax revenue, phasing out these products could strongly affect the world economy. Expanding on this, widespread nicotine consumption



continues to drive substantial morbidity and mortality, with tobacco-related diseases remaining among the leading causes of preventable death globally. Public-health efforts to reduce nicotine use have accelerated since the early 2000s, but the emergence of electronic nicotine delivery systems (vapes) has introduced new challenges for regulation, youth uptake, and long-term health assessment. Economic analyses indicate that while stronger controls reduce healthcare costs and improve population productivity over time, they can also lead to short-term job losses, declines in export earnings, and narrower tax bases in regions reliant on nicotine production. Without carefully managed policies, efforts to eliminate nicotine markets risk producing unintended economic and social harms that could undermine both public health gains and the livelihoods of vulnerable communities.

Key terms

Nicotine

Nicotine is an addictive chemical found in tobacco plants and products like cigarettes and vapes. It affects the brain and nervous system, creating temporary feelings of pleasure and making users depend on it.

Phasing out

The process of gradually eliminating or progressively removing nicotine products (such as cigarettes, vapes, patches, etc.) from the market through policies and strategies implemented in stages, rather than through an immediate ban.



Tobacco

Tobacco is a plant whose leaves are processed to make products like cigarettes, cigars, and chewing tobacco. It naturally contains Nicotine.

Public health policies

Government actions, laws, and regulations designed to protect and improve the health of populations, including measures like phasing out nicotine products to reduce smoking-related diseases and deaths.

Background Information

Main drivers of the crisis

The phasing out of nicotine products has become one of the most significant public health and economic challenges globally. The main drivers of this crisis are persistent: severe health consequences from nicotine use, aggressive tobacco industry marketing of new products, and government public health policies aimed at reducing smoking-related deaths. Tobacco use kills millions of people each year, and the introduction of new nicotine products has created new threats, particularly for young people. The tobacco industry is aggressively marketing new products such as e-cigarettes, vapes, and nicotine pouches, which it sells as "smoke free," and "less harmful," flooding markets around the world. This has caused governments worldwide to implement public health policies to phase out nicotine products, including the Tobacco-Free Generation or Nicotine-Free Generation policy, which prevents anyone born after a specific date from legally purchasing tobacco or nicotine products.



Public health effects on populations

Nicotine products deprivation is affecting the global economy and creating significant transitions for governments and industries. The most affected groups are tobacco industry workers and consumers who depend on nicotine products. More than 7 million people die each year from tobacco use (WHO, 2026), including smokers and those exposed to secondhand smoke. This causes governments to lose billions in tax revenue from tobacco sales, while healthcare systems face decreased costs from smoking-related diseases. As well, the tobacco industry faces existential threats from tobacco control policies, with companies investing heavily in electronic nicotine delivery systems to survive. This may cause manufacturers to shut down, lose employment, and move to other markets. Not only this, but the global market for nicotine products is worth hundreds of billions of dollars annually, which means phasing out these products will create massive economic shifts across countries that depend on tobacco production and sales.

Main Countries Involved

China

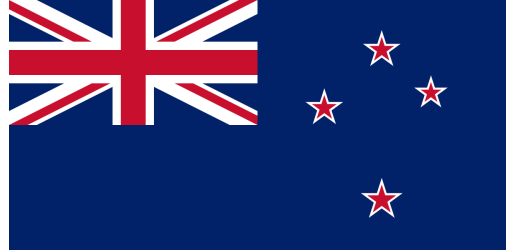
China is the most important player in the global nicotine market, as it is the largest producer and consumer of tobacco products. The industry is dominated by the state-owned China National Tobacco Corporation, meaning the government derives significant tax revenue from the sector. Therefore, any phase-out of nicotine products would have major economic repercussions for the country.





New Zealand

New Zealand has long been considered a global laboratory for anti-smoking policies. Its Smoke-Free legislation includes strict regulations on tobacco and vaping products, sales restrictions, and measures to reduce young people's access to nicotine.



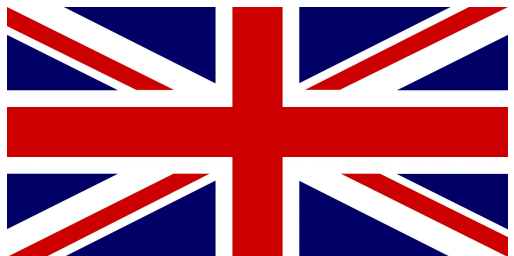
Brazil

Brazil is one of the world's largest producers and leading exporters of tobacco leaves. Although it has implemented smoking control policies and regulations for tobacco products, the sector remains a significant source of rural employment and export revenue.



United Kingdom

The United Kingdom is one of the countries that has implemented the most ambitious measures to reduce nicotine consumption. Its recent legislation aims to create a "smoke-free generation" by banning the sale of tobacco to future generations. The country argues that reducing smoking will significantly decrease healthcare costs and improve long-term economic productivity.





Previous attempts to solve the issue

1. WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) - 2003

The most significant international effort to address nicotine and tobacco consumption is the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), adopted by the World Health Assembly in 2003 and entering into force in 2005. As the first treaty negotiated under the auspices of the WHO, it established a global framework for tobacco control policies, including restrictions on advertising, smoke-free environments, tobacco taxation, health warnings, and measures to combat illicit trade. Today, it is one of the most widely ratified treaties in United Nations history, with more than 180 Parties. The FCTC remains the foundation of global tobacco control efforts.

2. New Zealand's "Nicotine-Free Generation" (Smokefree Generation) Policy

One of the most ambitious attempts to phase out tobacco was introduced by New Zealand in 2022. Commonly referred to as the "Nicotine-Free Generation" or "Smokefree Generation" policy, the legislation would have permanently prohibited the sale of tobacco products to anyone born on or after 1 January 2009. Additional measures included drastically reducing nicotine levels in cigarettes and reducing the number of tobacco retailers nationwide.

The policy attracted significant international attention and was viewed as a potential model for future tobacco control efforts. However, in 2024, the newly elected government repealed the legislation before its full implementation. Despite its repeal, the policy remains one of the most notable attempts to create a future generation largely free from tobacco addiction.



Possible solutions to the issue

1. Gradual Phase-Out of Nicotine Products

Member States could adopt a phased approach to reducing nicotine consumption through progressively stricter regulations on tobacco and nicotine products. This may include raising the minimum purchasing age, limiting points of sale, restricting advertising, and reducing nicotine content over time.

2. International Support for Economic Transition

Many countries depend on tobacco production for employment and exports. The WHO, in cooperation with international financial institutions, could encourage the creation of transition funds to help farmers shift toward alternative crops and support workers affected by declining tobacco demand.

3. Expansion of Smoking Cessation Programs

Governments could increase access to cessation services, including counseling, quitlines, educational campaigns, and medically approved treatments for nicotine dependence. Particular attention could be given to low- and middle-income countries where such services remain limited.

4. Global Public Education Campaigns

The WHO could coordinate international awareness campaigns highlighting the health risks associated with nicotine use, targeting vulnerable populations such as youth and young adults. Educational programs could also address misinformation surrounding emerging nicotine products.



5. Stronger Regulation of Emerging Nicotine Products

As the use of e-cigarettes and other alternative nicotine products increases, Member States could establish common international standards regarding marketing, product safety, packaging, and youth access to prevent a new generation of nicotine dependence.

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