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ВСЕМИРНАЯ ОРГАНИЗАЦИЯ ЗДРАВООХРАНЕНИЯ

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR EUROPE
BUREAU RÉGIONAL DE L'EUROPE
REGIONALBÜRO FÜR EUROPA
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Date: 14 March 2020

His Excellency Mr Archil Talakvadze
Chairman, Parliament of Georgia
8 Rustaveli Avenue
Tbilisi
Georgia

Your Excellency,

On behalf of the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe, please allow to express our deepest appreciation for the commitment of Georgia on preparedness and response to the COVID-19 outbreak as the situation continues to evolve rapidly around the world. We stand ready to provide all necessary support as it may be required.

I would like to express our gratitude to the Parliament of Georgia for its efforts to remain committed to strong tobacco control policies adopted in 2017 and aligned with WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). This was a major step forward and represents an outstanding example of efforts to control the tobacco epidemic in the European Region and globally.

Continuous successful implementation of this strong legislation is essential to protect health and economic wellbeing of population of Georgia from harms of tobacco use and exposure to the second-hand smoke. The prevalence of smoking in Georgia remains one of the highest in the WHO European Region. Almost one third of the adult population and 15% of Georgian youth is using tobacco.

Globally, the tobacco industry interference represents the key barrier to adoption and implementation of effective tobacco control policies. Tobacco industry's interests are in a fundamental and irreconcilable conflict with public health interests. According to the Art. 5.3 of the FCTC and its Guidelines, Parties are urged to endorse and implement comprehensive measures to protect tobacco control policies from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry. We count on your leadership in continuously protecting Georgian tobacco control policies from the tobacco industry interests.

We were informed about ongoing serious attempts to weaken the current Georgian tobacco control legislation. One of them is related to allowing hand rolling tobacco to be packed in much smaller packs than established by the current legislation while the other is related to the attempt of weakening current regulation on promotion, sales and use of novel tobacco products.

Sale of tobacco products in small packs will increase accessibility and affordability of tobacco products, especially for youth and vulnerable groups. Article 16 of the FCTC addresses this issue and requires countries to prohibit sale of tobacco products in small packs. It is also worth noting that the current Georgian tobacco control legislation is aligned with the EU Directive 2014/40/EU.

Tobacco industry worldwide is attempting to weaken tobacco control legislation by heavily marketing the novel tobacco products such as e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products. At the last Conference of the Parties to the FCTC (COP), heated tobacco products were recognized as tobacco products and thus should be regulated as such. COP also invited Parties to consider prohibiting or regulating electronic nicotine delivery systems, considering high level of protection for human health.

Georgia has currently one of the most advanced policies in regard to electronic nicotine delivery systems and heated tobacco products, protecting its population from the harm of those products. We count on your leadership to stop attempts of the tobacco industry to weaken the existing tobacco control legislation and thereby protect Georgian population, especially young people, from the devastating effects of tobacco use.

Let me use this opportunity to reassure you that the World Health Organization Regional Office for Europe continues to support Georgia in its efforts to protect and promote the health and well-being of the Georgian people.

Yours very truly,



Dr Hans Henri P. Kluge
Regional Director

Copy for information to:

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