



**Strict embargo 12.00hrs
Wednesday, 24 February 2010**

EU URGED TO KEEP HEALTH AT THE HEART OF HEALTH POLICY - NOT THE TOBACCO INDUSTRY

European institutions have been urged to maintain their independence from any tobacco industry pressure when developing health policies at the launch of a report in Brussels today (Wednesday).

After introducing the new policy review – ‘The Origin of Better Regulation-The Disturbing Truth – experts congratulated the achievements of the European Commission in reducing deaths caused by tobacco. But they have also highlighted their concern that undue influence from the tobacco industry is a threat to future health policies unless action is taken.

Health researchers believe the system of consultation in policy development is outdated and needs to be revised - with a full consultation from all stakeholders.

The general principles and minimum standards for consultation of interested parties by the Commission were adopted in 2002. Three years later the EU ratified a new treaty called the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)*.

The FCTC is a World Health Organization treaty setting out clear objectives to minimise the harm caused by tobacco. By ratifying the FCTC the EU is now legally bound by the provisions laid out within the treaty.

Specific measures such as banning tobacco advertising and raising prices, along with how policies are developed and limiting interaction with the tobacco industry are set out in the FCTC. A full review of the current system would help develop a new process and match the obligations of the EU to the commitments of the FCTC.

The organisers of the event welcomed EU Commission president Barroso’s decision to take direct charge of the better regulation services but stressed that work needed to continue to ensure that better regulation does not become an economics only approach. The organisers highlight this would run counter to the citizen first approach set out in his September policy guidelines.

Florence Berteletti-Kemp said: “Better Regulation is a little like the Emperor’s new clothes. A lot of people talk about how “good” the system is. But like the child in the story, the research points to the fact that the system is very complex and that very few stakeholders understand it fully.

“The research does not prove that BAT’s strategy has been successful but it clearly shows that large corporations spend a great deal of time thinking about how to



influence the Better Regulation agenda. This is a wakeup call to all working in public health and, as Director of the Smoke Free Partnership, I will examine closely how the Tobacco Product Directive impact assessment will be developed in the coming months.

“Without a serious examination of the whole process of health policy development, of making sure that health – not profits – is the goal of these policies then we risk having ineffective regulations that fail to protect people from the harm of tobacco. The Commission needs to ensure that risk assessments and impact assessment are not biased in favour of corporate interests so that the policies using them can adequately protect health and the environment. We look forward to seeing Better Regulation being developed into a fairer, more transparent and democratic mechanism under Barroso II.”

Jean King, Cancer Research UK’s director of tobacco control, said: “The FCTC clearly states that there is a fundamental and irreconcilable conflict between the interests of the tobacco industry and public health. In its recent tobacco control strategy for England - ‘A Smokefree Future’** - the UK Government has committed to transparency and to publish details of meetings held between officials and representatives of the Tobacco industry. We urge the Commission to do the same.”

Arlene McCarthy MEP said: “The Smokefree Partnership and Cancer Research UK have raised legitimate concerns about the level of influence the tobacco lobby is having on EU policy. It is my job as a legislator to ensure that the health and environmental concerns of citizens are heard as loudly as the voice of businesses and industry. That is why I am giving a platform in the European Parliament for this important event.”

ENDS

For more information contact Florence Berteletti Kemp at the Smoke Free Partnership on +32 2 238 53 63 or 0496 12 43 02

Notes to editor:

* The EU ratified the FCTC on 30 June 2005

**A Smokefree Future is the new tobacco control strategy for England launched on February 1 2010. For more information go to:

http://www.dh.gov.uk/en/News/Recentstories/DH_111744

Article 5.3 of the FCTC states that countries must protect their policies from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry. For more information go to:



http://www.who.int/fctc/guidelines/article_5_3/en/index.html

Download a full copy of the 'The Origin of Better Regulation-The Disturbing Truth' here: www.smokefreepartnership.eu (front page)

The general principles and minimum standards for the consultation of interested partiesⁱ

The document should take into consideration its obligation under the Framework Convention for Tobacco Control (FCTC) as well as art 11 of the New Lisbon Treaty.

ⁱ http://ec.europa.eu/civil_society/consultation_standards/index_en.htm