

Joint Statement on Agenda item 14: Strategy and Plan of Action to Strengthen Tobacco Control in the Region of the Americas 2018-2022: Mid-term Review ([CD58/INF/14](#))

We deliver this statement on behalf of the InterAmerican Heart Foundation, Framework Convention Alliance, NCD Alliance and Healthy Latin American Coalition.

Tobacco use in the Americas is one of the main risk factors for noncommunicable diseases (NCDs) and continues to be a major public health concern. We, therefore, welcome the presentation of this Mid-term Review of the Strategy and Plan of Action to Strengthen Tobacco Control in the Region of the Americas 2018-2022, as it is an essential accountability effort and an evaluation of the progress to date in the regional implementation of the WHO Framework Convention for Tobacco Control. This report permits to address the strong influence and pressure of a tobacco industry that seeks to delay, divide, divert and deny the evidence and recommended policies for tobacco control, especially in the current context of COVID-19.

The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the inequities faced by people living with NCDs, with tobacco use increasing the risk of developing severe COVID-19 outcomes and death. The great challenge we face due to the pandemic is exacerbated by the activities of unhealthy commodity industries, including tobacco companies, which since the beginning of the pandemic have increased the promotion of their products and engaged in actions that damage the health of everyone in the Americas.

We call on PAHO Member States to:

- Take up the priority actions outlined in the midterm review of the Regional Strategy;
- Continue to protect public health from tobacco industry interference, in line with article 5.3 of the FCTC;
- Hold unhealthy commodity industries, including tobacco companies, to account for advancing the NCD epidemic, aggravating its risk factors and its social, economic and environmental determinants.

Now more than ever, greater commitment and action are needed to drive progress towards the targets outlined in the WHO FCTC Global Strategy to Accelerate Tobacco Control, as well as to create healthier and more resilient populations in the region.