

Health experts call for stiffer regulations on tobacco control

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Health experts and stakeholder organisations have suggested a seven-point of action to be taken by government on tobacco control.

The action places emphasis on the promotion of partnerships, building of capacities of different stakeholders to advocate, support and monitor progress on tobacco control as part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) implementation effort.

The declaration was made during a round-table discussion held under the theme: “Tobacco a threat to development” in Accra.

At the meeting were representatives from the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Trade and Industry, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Tourism, and Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection.

Others were the Food and Drugs Authority, Ghana Revenue Authority, Ghana Police Service, Ghana Education Service, Environmental Protection Agency, National Sustainable Development Goals Secretariat, the Christian Council of Ghana, Office of the National Chief Imam, Ghana Coalition of NGOs in Health, Coalition of NGOs in Tobacco Control and the Media Alliance in Tobacco Control/Health.

The conference was organised under the auspices of the Vision for Alternative Development (VALD), a non-governmental organisation and was sponsored by Framework Convention Alliance and the Norwegian Cancer Society.

The health experts called for the prioritization of tobacco control to combat the epidemic in order to achieve the SDGs as well as strengthen national tobacco control and Non-Communicable Disease (NCD) policies.

They said there is the need to step up efforts to increase tobacco taxes in accordance with the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development (2015), adding that the increase in tobacco taxes is the most direct and effective strategy to reduce tobacco use.

The declaration called for support mechanisms to educate and offer treatment support and cessation services; mobilise and allocate resources for tobacco control implementation; and to strengthen mechanisms for monitoring and countering tobacco industry interference.

They said the tobacco concern is a development issue and must be addressed as part of our national development agenda.

“We declare that we will work together to strengthen the implementation of tobacco control efforts in the country as part of our strategies to attain sustainable human development.”

They reaffirmed their commitment to a comprehensive multi-sectoral action plan to effectively implement the Tobacco Control Measures of the Public Health Act (Act 851) to ensure reduction in consumption, sustainable investment in a healthier productive population.

“We know that reducing tobacco use is critical to achieving all the 17 SDGs, as it will improve individual health and prosperity, advance economic productivity and protect the planet,” the conference said.

Madam Juliana Ansong, the World Health Organisation Focal Person on Tobacco, called for urgent increases on tobacco taxes to control its use and prevent premature deaths from non-communicable diseases.

She said the revenue generated from the taxes should be used to finance universal health coverage as well as other development programmes.

Madam Ansong said tobacco control could break the cycle of poverty, contribute to ending hunger, promote sustainable agriculture and economic growth and combat climate change.

She urged Ghanaians to support the fight for tobacco control to save lives, uplift development and reduce health inequalities.

Mr Emmanuel Kofi Nti, the Commissioner General of the Ghana Revenue Authority, expressed his support for tobacco control especially among the poor and the youth.

He said the most effective way to reduce tobacco use was to increase prices on cigarette which is in an elastic demand to raise revenue for national development.

Mr Nti said currently the excise tax on cigarette products was below 20 per cent while the advanced countries are taking 70 per cent, hence the need to adjust our current rate.

Source: GNA

Link: <https://citifmonline.com/2017/06/16/health-experts-call-for-stiffer-regulations-on-tobacco-control/>