

FINAL DRAFT

Alliance of Public Health Associations of the Americas (AASPA) Anti-tobacco Declaration

The Alliance of Public Health Associations of the Americas (AASPA) recognizes that tobacco is the leading cause of preventable disease and death in our hemisphere as well as globally. As national public health associations that are committed to the betterment of our nations through public health, social justice, racial equality and protecting our planet, we recognize the devastating impacts tobacco and vaping have on our society.

Every year, 1 million people in our hemisphere die due to tobacco use, vaping, second-hand smoke and other smoking-related chronic illnesses that cost the region more than \$209 billion in healthcare costs (PAHO, 2016).¹ Tobacco is a major risk factor for noncommunicable diseases (cardiovascular, respiratory, cancer and diabetes). In the Americas, 80% of deaths of which 35% are considered premature (before 70 years of age), is attributed to tobacco-related mortality (PAHO, 2016).¹ Beyond health outcomes, tobacco consumption strains health systems and poses an economic burden due to the loss of productivity. Within and between countries, the effects from tobacco use further drive poverty and widen the health inequalities gap. Likewise, the epidemiological trends within our region indicate several shifts: 1) children and adolescents are starting to consume tobacco at earlier ages; 2) the tobacco epidemic is becoming more feminized; 3) the overall use of tobacco is rising; and 4) the use of Electronic Nicotine Administration Systems (ENAS) and Heated Tobacco Products (HTPs), popularly called “vaping”, is becoming a fashionable pandemic among children and young people in our region, stimulated by a combination of aggressive marketing strategies as well as packaging with popular images and flavorings. The high concentrations of nicotine in vaping products ensure an early onset of addiction that is very difficult to abandon and with serious long-term health consequences.

The tactics of the tobacco industry to resist and interfere with tobacco control policies is well-documented at the national and global levels. Some of these efforts include public relations campaigns, hiring lobbyists to influence policy or weaken legislation, and buying expertise to tear down well-known scientific facts (Saloojee, 2000).² These companies often cast partners or charitable giving recipients as allies and misrepresent these relationships in ways that continue to support this deadly addiction. We acknowledge that accepting funding or forming alliances with the tobacco and vaping industries have the potential to imply support for this deadly business.

We are committed to working collaboratively with our members as well as partners to advocate and adopt policies that prevent inappropriate collaboration with the tobacco/vaping industry or their

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Mitchell, Cristina. “PAHO/WHO: More Government Action Needed to Reverse the Smoking Epidemic in the Americas.” *Pan American Health Organization / World Health Organization*, 18 May 2016, www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=12029%3Amore-government-action-needed-to-reverse-the-smoking-epidemic&Itemid=1926&lang=en.

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Saloojee, Y, and E Dagli. “Tobacco industry tactics for resisting public policy on health.” *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* vol. 78,7 (2000): 902-10.

associated front groups. As a collective of national public health associations representing the Americas, we recognize our fundamental roles in bringing greater public awareness on the far-reaching influence, unrestricted support and the detrimental impacts of the tobacco industry on global public health. We acknowledge that building public momentum and support is needed to establish policies that are favorable to health. In particular, prevention efforts for children, adolescents and young adults must be aimed at social and environmental influences across all settings (i.e. academic, recreational and cultural).

The Alliance of Public Health Associations of the Americas declares our full support for the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and strongly encourages our member organizations in the Americas and the Caribbean region to adopt the recommendations established in the treaty and to reject funding from or any form of partnership with the tobacco or vaping industry. If countries fully implement the FCTC, they can reach a 30% reduction in the prevalence of tobacco use among people over the age of 15 by 2025 (PAHO, 2016).¹ These actions will lead to a significant reduction in noncommunicable diseases by 25% within the same year (PAHO, 2016)¹. Additionally, these actions will support the public health management of the current COVID-19 pandemic considering both smokers and vapers are at higher risk of contracting the virus and its variants.³

We call upon our members to take the lead on this important issue within their respective countries and to advocate for stronger implementation of the MPOWER measures from the Convention including: the increased taxation on tobacco and its products; pictorial warning labels and neutral packaging; bans on tobacco advertising/sponsorship; the establishment of spaces that are 100% free from tobacco smoke and its products; the adoption of protocols to stop the illicit trade in tobacco products; and greater support for prevention campaigns through mass media as well as programs focused on medical counseling and treatments, including smoking cessation.

³ World Health Organization (WHO). WHO statement: Tobacco use and COVID-19. 11 May 2020