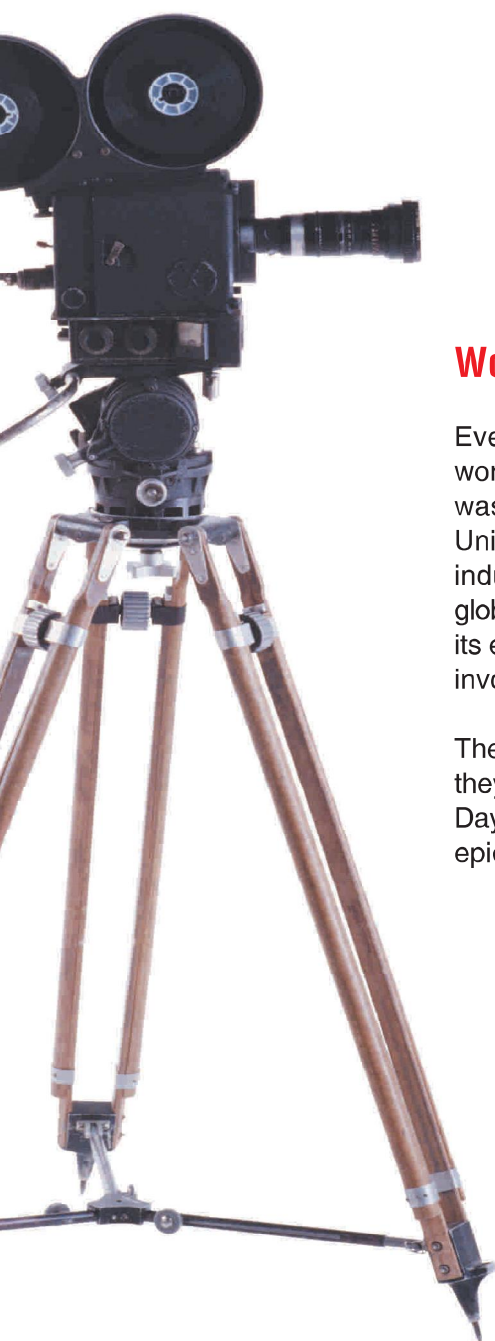# tobacco kills

it shouldn't be advertised, glamorized or subsidized

World Health Organization
Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean
Tobacco Free Initiative
www.emro.who.int/tfi/tfi.htm

World No Tobacco Day 31 May 2003

World No Tobacco Day

Every year World No Tobacco Day is celebrated on 31 May. Yet work on this worldwide event begins months before the event itself. In November 2002, WHO was joined by medical associations and the Smoke Free Films project at the University of California in San Francisco in its call to the film and entertainment industries to ensure that their social responsibility is commensurate with their global influence. In particular, Hollywood, the giant US film industry and Bollywood, its equivalent in India, were invited to join the global movement to rid films of their involvement in tobacco promotion.

The world of films and entertainment cannot be accused of causing cancer. But they do not have to promote a product i.e. tobacco, that does. World No Tobacco Day 2003 will focus on the role of films and entertainment in fostering a worldwide epidemic and urge them to stop being used as vehicles of death and disease.

" Tobacco products kill around 4.9 million people annually in the world and are responsible for 13.4 thousand deaths per day, figures that are rising year on year. "

Message from **Dr Hussein A. Gezairy**

WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean

On the occasion of World No Tobacco Day 2003, WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region aims to convey a basic, important message that will take the success of tobacco control efforts in the Region forward a step further. That message is to free entertainment from direct and indirect advertising and use of tobacco. The tobacco industry has, for decades, been exploiting the entertainment industry, turning it into an advertising medium for its products, and taking advantage of its popularity and appeal to make tobacco use more and more attractive to the public, in particular to young people.

Tobacco use has become one of the major public health problems in the world, particularly in our Region. Prevalence rates are now up to 46% among adolescents aged 13–15 years in some countries of the Region. In other countries, 8 out of 10 students aged 13–15 live in houses where others smoke in their presence, while 6 out of 10 are exposed to second-hand smoke in public places. The theme of this years' World No Tobacco Day for the Eastern Mediterranean is "Tobacco Free Films" and the aim is to advertise and glamorize not tobacco, but tobacco control, with the help of film stars and entertainment celebrities.

The entertainment industry must strive to regulate the explicit use of tobacco products on screens across the globe. Although it is true that the tobacco industry is responsible for tempting youth and children into the deadly smoking habit through their excessive exploitation and manipulation of tobacco products on-screen, they are unfortunately, not the only party at fault in this area. Over the years, worldwide, the entertainment industry has aided and abetted the tobacco industry, both directly and indirectly, sometimes consciously, often unconsciously, in the marketing of their products_products that kill around 4.9 million people annually in the world and are responsible for 13.4 thousand deaths per day, figures that are rising year on year.

In order to highlight the problem, WHO is joining hands with celebrities in the entertainment industry to support tobacco control. From the Eastern Mediterranean Region two well known personalities are working hand in hand with the Regional Office to communicate the right health message to the community and in particular to young people: Ms Magida El Roumi, the renowned Lebanese singer; and Mr George Kordahi, the famous Lebanese host of the Arabic version of the game show "Who wants to be a millionaire?" and United Nations Environment Programme Ambassador of Goodwill to the Middle East. With their support we aim to expose the glamour associated with tobacco use for the lie that it is, whether on-screen, at home or in public places.

This World No Tobacco Day represents an opportunity in this electronic age, when young people are bombarded by conflicting media messages, to work together to create a new positive image that promotes control rather than use of tobacco, and to destroy the old image of glamour created for its products by the tobacco industry and its partners. Let us join together to support this effort and make the non-tobacco user the 'hero' of the story.

> **"** The central focus of these efforts needs to be geared towards youth in schools and universities as addiction has been identified to start at this level. **"**

Message from **Mr George Kordahi**

Host of the Arabic version of the game show "Who wants to be a millionaire?"
and United Nations Environment Programme Ambassador of Goodwill to the Middle East

Without a doubt, the past two decades have witnessed continuous and effective efforts to control the use of tobacco and the associated abuse of drugs etc. WHO has been the principal engine driving these efforts which have produced fruitful results in so many parts of the world, and has led a lot of smokers to stop this habit that is so deadly to health and to society.

But, despite the numerous efforts, and the positive outcomes achieved, many people in developed countries and particularly developing countries still remain victims to this addiction. Moreover, a large number of these people are victims to a more deadly addiction, that of drugs … an end often reached as a result of smoking.

I believe that tobacco control still requires a lot of hard work not only in developed countries but particularly in developing countries. The central focus of these efforts needs to be geared towards youth in schools and universities as addiction has been identified to start at this level.

The battle against smoking and addiction must expand to cover more than just simple health campaigns; it must target and directly counter the activities of tobacco companies by waging war against them all around the world.

WHO, and its local and international partners, need to focus their efforts in the coming years on mobilizing developing countries to adopt and implement tobacco control models that have succeeded in developed countries, and particularly measures concerned with restricting the marketing and advertising activities of tobacco companies because health awareness campaigns in developing countries are currently far less than they should be, especially at the levels of tobacco and drug control.

Tobacco Free Films
Tobacco Free Entertainment

If a tobacco product seems macho or feminine, sophisticated or rugged, sexy or sporty it is because of the marketing around it. From the colour of the packaging and lettering, to the neighbourhoods where advertising billboards are posted, to the parties and concerts where the product is promoted and given away free of charge, to the sports events where top athletes compete emblazoned with brands and logos, to the clothes and fashion accessories that bear tobacco products' name and logo, to the beautiful people who use it on screen, stage and at glamorous venues, selling tobacco products is all about creating an image.

> **"** Cigarettes have never been a logical product and brand choice has always been determined by images formed by countless variations of history, tradition, names, slogans and advertising, appealing on an emotional level rather than for rational choice. **"**

British American Tobacco[1]

There is a brand to suit every personality and a personality for every brand

One does not have to search far to identify these histories and traditions. There are brands for the emancipated, independent woman; for the outdoorsy, rugged man; for the sophisticated, luxury-minded set; for the successful business person; for the young and whimsical; for the party crowd; for the intellectual. No one is left out.

The tobacco industry knows this all too well and has fine-tuned, if not helped to invent, the most sophisticated of marketing strategies to build these images. These strategies work in conjunction with multifaceted distribution networks and complex pricing schemes.

Two of the most successful contexts in which to build these images are the film and entertainment industries. They shape the market and dictate what and who are in or out. They help establish and reinforce norms of beauty, success and fun. They help shape the dreams and fantasies of the young and old.

Given their huge potential for influencing the public, especially young people, the film and entertainment industries are fertile ground for tobacco industry marketing tactics.

In fact, a cigarette has no personality of its own, nor social class nor emotion. It is a stick of tobacco, paper, glue and upwards of 600 chemicals. It is the only consumer product available that is designed to create and maintain addiction, and that ultimately kills half its regular users.

But in the hand of a silver screen star, it is a mighty stick. When they are happy, when they are sad, when they are troubled, when they are not, when they are angry, when they are relieved or sometimes when they have nothing to do, a cigarette serves as a perfect prop for actors. Or does it?

The situation in the Eastern Mediterranean Region is no different

The Center for Development Services—Youth, Voluntarism and Employment Program carried out a survey aiming at identifying the various images linked with tobacco use across 100 randomly selected Egyptian films from the 1950s to present day. It was found that tobacco use in films was associated with scenes that reflected: masculinity, strength and power; irritability, tension and anger; social gatherings and group outings; self-indulgence, pleasure-seeking and the night-time party life; and pensiveness and creativity.[2]

Images associated with tobacco use in 100 Egyptian films 1950s–present

Category	Number of scenes
Masculinity, strength & power	226
Irritability, tension & anger	134
Social gatherings & group outings	88
Self-indulgence, pleasure-seeking & night-time party life	51
Pensiveness & creativity	45
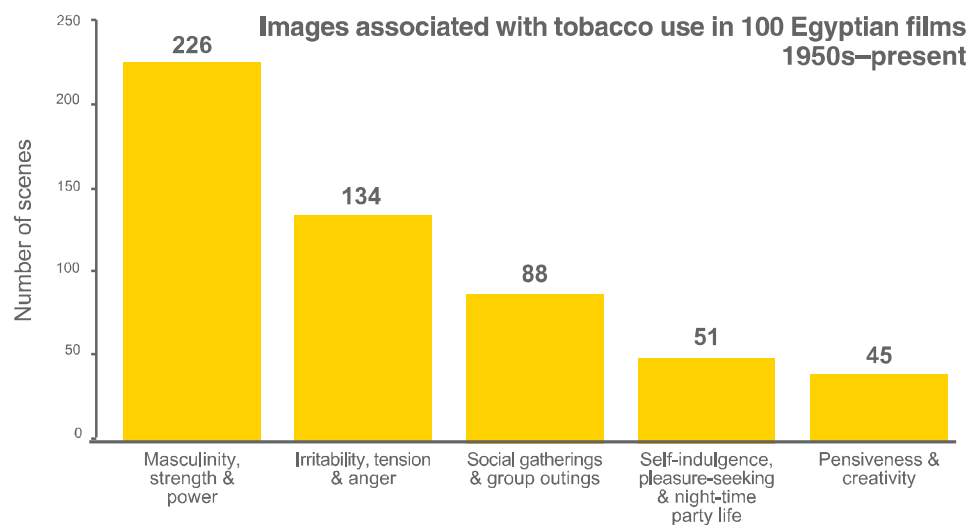
The industry is targeting young people

On the big screen and small screen, stars are modern-day heroes. The way they speak, the clothes they wear, what they eat and drink both on and off screen greatly influences public behaviour and preferences, particularly among young people.

Young people who see smoking in films are more likely to smoke. Tobacco companies have also understood this phenomenon. Marlboros, Philip Morris's number one brand, have been featured in at least 28 of Hollywood's top-grossing films in the past ten years[3]; other leading brands are also being cast. Studies show that the tobacco brands featured most in top-grossing films are also the most heavily-advertised in other media.[4]

Research in the USA has found that non-smoking teenagers whose favourite stars frequently smoke on screen are 16 times more likely to have positive attitudes towards smoking in the future.[5] Even more important, 31% of teenagers who saw more than 150 occurrences of smoking in films in cinemas, on video, or on television, had tried smoking compared to only 4% among teenagers who had seen less than 50 occurrences.[6] Even after controlling for the effects of parents smoking and other factors, seeing a lot of smoking in films tripled the odds that a teenager would try smoking.[7]

From 1988 to 1997, 85% of the top 25 box office Hollywood films dramatized the use of tobacco, the highest rate in half a century. A third of films rated for adolescents, and one in five children's films rated G or PG showed cigarette brand logos.[8]

*Young people
who see smoking
in films are more
likely to smoke*

In their study of 100 Egyptian films, the Center for Development Services describes the changing patterns of tobacco use in these films and concludes that Egyptian films not only reflect changes in society but have also had some influence on the spread of tobacco use in society by linking tobacco use to these changes on screen. The study shows a steady increase in tobacco use in Egyptian films starting from the 1950s and peaking during the 1970s. It was also noted after an in-depth analysis of 10 randomly selected films across each decade that the 1970s had the highest rates of tobacco occurrence in films, reaching 428 scenes. The rise in this figure was mainly attributed to tobacco use by actors and actresses in supporting roles.

Occurrence of tobacco use in Egyptian films 1950s–present

Base for analysis: 10 films per decade
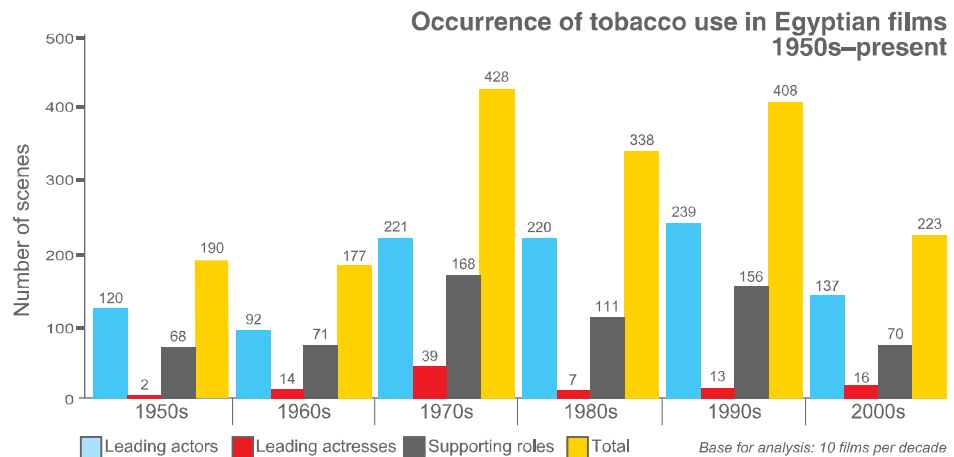
Being the era where Egypt's peace treaty with Israel was signed and the economic "open door policy" came into effect, the 1970s subsequently saw an integral change in the film industry. A new segment of the population characterized by money and power rose on and off screen, becoming one of the key images that film-makers associated with tobacco use in Egyptian films. Moreover, women smokers started to appear on screen, changing the image associated with tobacco use and women, and moulding it into a more common practice in comparison with previous eras where a woman smoking was deemed socially unacceptable.

The economic "open door policy" of the 1970s led to the aggressive entry of multinational tobacco companies into the Egyptian market, and also witnessed the appearance of the shisha (water-pipe) on screen. During this period, the use of shisha in films was associated with the lower-income bracket of society, portrayed by film-makers as gangs and their leaders, who used shisha to smoke hashish and other drugs.

During the pre-1970s era, directors played a key role with regard to tobacco use in films. In the 1940s, they travelled to Europe to learn about directing. From there, they associated scenes of tobacco use in films with a segment of society that was viewed as chic and civilized when addressing men, and upper-class and aristocratic when relating to women. However, since this segment only reflected a small portion of society, tobacco use did not spread dramatically.

After the 1952 revolution in Egypt, images linked to tobacco use in films changed and became associated with the police, individuals in charge of security affairs, interrogation settings and underground meetings. And, since these segments reflected the bulk of society (the middle-class), this encouraged the spread of tobacco use, although not among women; women who smoked during the 1950s were being shown as somewhat promiscuous.

Films of the 1960s and 1970s aimed to communicate the key message of equality in class, gender and behaviour. Film-makers were now showing men and women smoking together, and the fact that women smoking was shown at all indicated a more socially acceptable behaviour than in previous eras.

During the 1980s, tobacco use in films dropped slightly. This was a period where a different type of films emerged, focusing on the hardships of the individual. Girls and women were shown smoking less, while the stereotypical image of the "hero" was changing, after being depicted as a simple, down-to-earth individual. At the same time, films in the 1980s began to reflect the elements of drug abuse and addiction which were characteristic of that period.

As the 1990s opened, tobacco use in films started to increase once again, particularly in association with men, and scenes of girls as "closet" smokers. Shisha also started to reappear in films, but its use was now being linked to middle-class youth who smoked it in cafes. Thus, film-makers were changing its image, from a means to smoke hashish and other drugs, to an acceptable social activity, part of the warm and enjoyable atmosphere of middle-class life and gatherings.

With the turn of the century, a new type of "young" hero started to appear in films and girls from all socioeconomic classes were shown smoking both cigarettes and shisha. Although this period does not match that of the 1970s in terms of smoking occurrence in films, it does however reflect a time of severe contradiction. Films of the 21st century to date, on the one hand portray positive images of successful and committed youth who do not smoke and, on the other hand portray youth who deviate, smoke and take drugs but who nonetheless manage to succeed and attain their aspired goals.

The Egyptian film industry and Hollywood have no exclusivity on tobacco use

The infestation of the silver screen with tobacco products extends even further. Bollywood, based in Mumbai, India, is the world's largest film industry, producing more than 800 films every year. Its influence reaches countries around the world, particularly in South Asia, the Middle East and Africa. A study of a sample of 395 Indian films made between 1991 and 2002 reveals that 302, or 76.5%, showed tobacco use. While tobacco use in India is mostly in the form of smokeless tobacco or locally modified cigarettes referred to as gutka (paste of powdered tobacco molasses and other ingredients for chewing) or bidis (shredded, sun-dried tobacco hand rolled into a piece of leaf for smoking), films project another vision. Nearly 72% of tobacco use in the films studied concerned cigarette smoking.[9]

The commercial stakes are enormous. One RJ Reynolds marketing analyst outlined why smoking in films is so important to the tobacco industry:

" The medium is the message, and the message would be right, part of the show. How different from being the Corporate Moneybags or pushing samples in the lobby. It's the difference between B&W [Brown and Williamson Tobacco] doing commercials in movie houses and Marlboro turning up in the movies. Pull, not push. Nobody tells them the 'answer,' they just know. Not 'why are you smoking that?' but 'I saw that video — can I try one?' If they feel like wearing the badge, they'll buy it. Like magic.[10] "

Product or brand placement, as described by marketing experts, is the art of locating and negotiating prominent placements for a product, name or service in both feature films and television programmes. Product placement is an inexpensive way to build brand recognition, enhance corporate image and provide promotional opportunities through some of today's most successful films and television programmes.

The unique circumstances around this kind of marketing: exciting settings, implied celebrity endorsement, captive audience, uncluttered environment is said to make product placement "an ideal medium to support an image building campaign".[11] Product placement has become an accepted practice among TV and film producers and a convenient way to offset some of the production costs. The Los Angeles agency, Norm Marshall & Associates, credited with parking a BMW in James Bond's garage in "Goldeneye", traces product placement in films back to the 1940s when NW Ayer, advertising agency for the diamond giant De Beers, arranged for glamorous film stars to be draped in its gems on screen. In the 1950s, Ace comb sales soared after James Dean swept one through his hair in "Rebel Without a Cause".

The United States Consumers Union stated that:

> " Product placements in movies...create brand awareness and communicate promotional messages. [They] are less-than-forthright ways of selling to adults. Yet these techniques also pervade the media kids enjoy with their guard down. Products sold in this fashion include tobacco and alcohol. "

A study conducted by the National Coalition on TV Violence found that of 150 films monitored in 1989, 83% featured tobacco use.[12] By the late 1980s, cigarette product placement in films was so rampant that the United States Congress considered legislation banning them and an agreement was reached with tobacco companies to stop the practice. Among other recommendations, the Consumers Union called for Congress to "enact legislation that would bar tobacco and liquor companies from paying to place their products in movies. This disguised advertising of hazardous and potentially addictive products should not be tolerated by a society that values the health of its children".[13]

Product placement and other entertainment marketing techniques attempt to persuade viewers to buy a product because a screen star uses it. At the same time placement fees ease production costs for increasingly expensive film projects. "Without 'strategic alliances' some films simply could not be made", said Mr John Zamoiski, chairman and president of the Product Marketing Association (PMA), a New York-based group specializing in entertainment communications.

Tobacco companies regularly provide cigarettes, gifts, services or cash in exchange for placement of their products in films. Companies work to place their products in specific films and have them smoked by specific actors. Previously secret tobacco industry documents contain correspondence and contracts between cigarette makers, actors and studios for the use of certain brands or for the appearance of advertisements, packs, billboards, trucks and other items bearing brands' names and logos.[14]

The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control

In May 2003, the 192 Member States of WHO are slated to put their stamp of approval on a treaty they have been developing for the past 5 years. The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), WHO's first treaty-making endeavour, will lay down global rules for, among other things, the marketing, advertising, promotion and sponsorship of tobacco products.
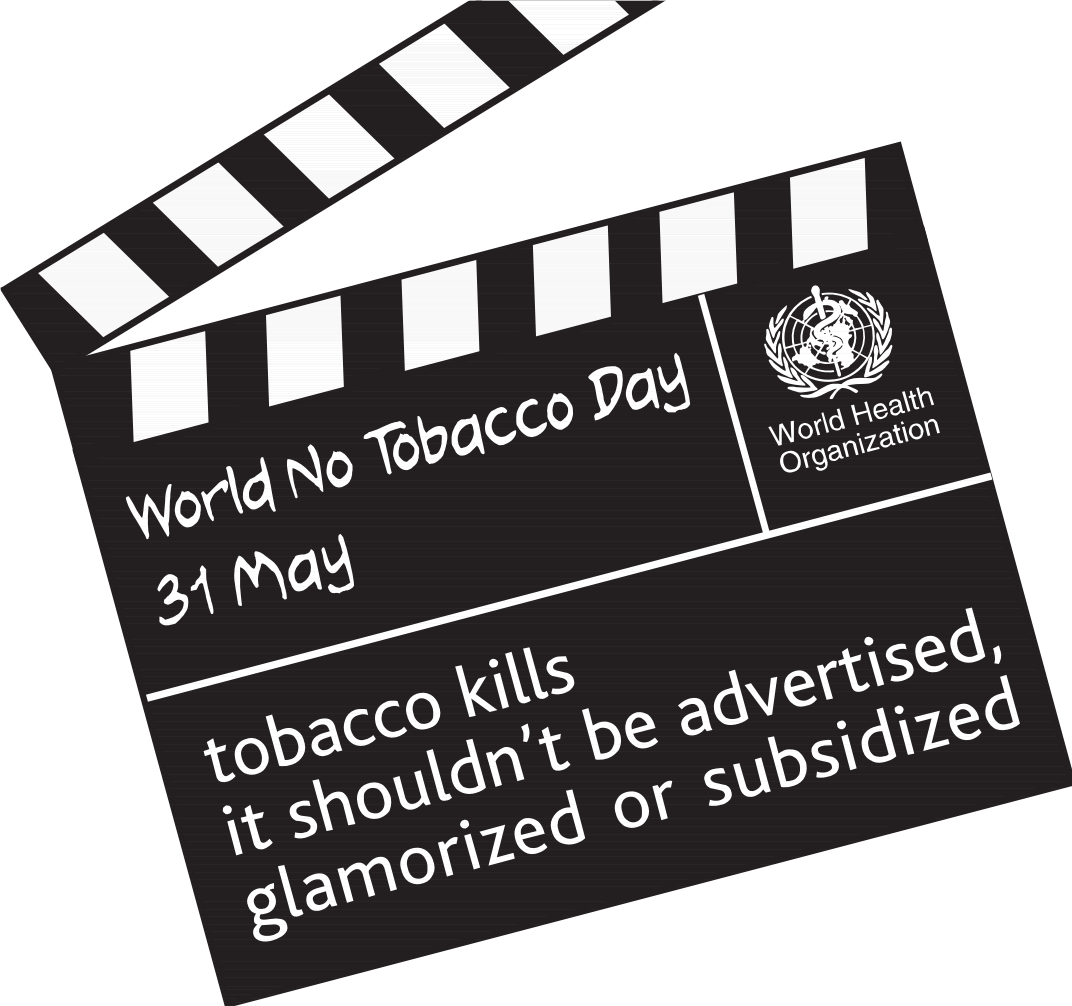
It is WHO's view that the tobacco epidemic that now kills some 5 million people per year, is a disease that is communicated through advertising. In 2002, WHO called for an end to tobacco industry manipulation of sports. By deciding to call for a similar ban on tobacco promotion in the film and entertainment industries, the FCTC is calling for international scrutiny and responsibility around a product that is promoted freely despite being designed to kill one out of two of its regular consumers.

Under pressure brought about in large part by the FCTC process, tobacco companies are working on several fronts to retain their hold over markets, especially markets that cater to young people, by announcing self-regulation plans. They propose to enforce these standards voluntarily and to target advertising only at adult smokers. No country has succeeded in designing regulation (especially voluntary ones) that eliminate children's exposure to advertising while allowing advertising only aimed at adults.

Over the past few months, there has been a rush of tobacco industry-funded or assisted campaigns which tobacco companies claim are designed to prevent youth smoking. There is a lot of evidence to show that these campaigns do not work and, in most cases, encourage young people to smoke. The tobacco industry is part of the problem. It cannot be part of the solution.

If the tobacco industry was genuinely interested in curbing the galloping youth smoking rates worldwide, they would support advertising bans and tax increases which are the two most effective tobacco control interventions.

World No Tobacco Day 31 May

World Health Organization

tobacco kills it shouldn't be advertised, glamorized or subsidized

Call for Action

WHO is calling on the entertainment industry, in particular the world of films and television, to stop promoting a product that kills a regular user every 6.5 seconds. Towards this end, the film and television industries are invited to:

■ **Certify no payoffs.** Producers should post a certificate in the credits at the end of the film declaring that nobody on the production received anything of value (cash money, free cigarettes or other gifts, free publicity, interest free loans or anything else) from anyone in exchange for using or displaying tobacco products.

■ **Require strong anti-tobacco advertisements.** Film studios and cinemas should be required to run an anti-smoking advertisement before any film with any tobacco presence, regardless of its rating.

■ **Stop identifying tobacco brands.** There should be no tobacco brand identification and no tobacco brand imagery (such as billboards) in the action or background of any film scene.

■ **Implement a rating system.** Any use of tobacco or presentation of tobacco advertising or similar pro-tobacco imagery should incur a rating indicating adult content and the need for parental guidance. These films can be rated less severely, however, if by a special vote, the officials feel that the presentation of tobacco clearly and unambiguously reflects the dangers and consequences of tobacco use so that a lesser rating would more responsibly reflect the opinion of parents.

These steps can be implemented without censorship or infringing on the creative process.

For further reading on Smoke Free Movies, visit www.smokefreemovies.ucsf.edu

1   "The Vanishing Media". BAT 500062147/2159
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