



Malawi should sustain its political will and not delay passing a WHO FCTC-compliant law

Statement of Leonce Dieudonne SESSOU, Executive Secretary of the African Tobacco Control Alliance (ATCA) on Malawi's ratification of the WHO FCTC

For immediate release

Lomé, 04 September 2023 - The African Tobacco Control Alliance (ATCA) congratulates Malawi for becoming the newest Party to the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC). We commend the government of Malawi for this bold measure which paves the way for intensified efforts to effectively protect the people of Malawi from the dreadful consequences of tobacco.¹

It is true that tobacco farming is currently an important source of foreign exchange earnings for Malawi,² but that is because the country had not been open to the opportunities and benefits that come with being a Party to the WHO FCTC. We also cannot ignore the huge economic, environmental and health burdens posed by tobacco that certainly contribute to making the country permanently counted amongst the poorest in the world.

And while it is claimed to be a major source of economic empowerment for families, tobacco farming undoubtedly causes most tobacco farmers in Malawi to live in abject poverty. Each year, they are lent the money that pays for crop inputs and maize to feed their families. Once their crop has been harvested and sold, they are paid whatever is left after the loan is subtracted. But the sale of tobacco is often insufficient to cover their loan, and as such, many farmers start the next season in debt.³

More than 5,700 Malawians are killed by tobacco-related disease every year. Still, more than 5,000 children (10-14 years old) and 707,000 adults (15+ years old) continue to use tobacco each day.⁴ Malawi not being a Party to the WHO FCTC, very little efforts could be made to remedy the situation. Today, ATCA and the entire African tobacco control community rejoices because Malawi's historic ratification of the convention sets the ball rolling for its implementation in the country.

The 2021 global progress report on implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control⁵ provides evidence that implementation of the WHO FCTC saves lives and leads to improved sustainable development. As we commend Malawi for this milestone, therefore, we also call for sustenance of this political will to protect the Malawian population from tobacco and the tobacco industry through rapid and full implementation of the WHO FCTC.

The best way to do this is through the passing of a strong tobacco control law that amongst others, is protected from tobacco industry interference, protects the population from tobacco smoke, promotes effective quit mechanisms, adequately warns about the dangers of tobacco use, institutes a comprehensive ban on tobacco advertisement, promotion, and sponsorship, adequately taxes tobacco products, etc. ATCA stands ready to collaborate with national and international partners to provide the necessary support to inform such a legislation, as well as its effective implementation.

¹ [Tobacco \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int)

² <https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/scr/2015/cr15346.pdf>

³ Tobacco production and tenancy labour in Malawi - treating individuals and families as mere instruments of production. Lilongwe: Centre for Social Concern; 2015.

⁴ <https://mwnation.com/tobacco-kills-5-700-malawi-global-atlas/>

⁵ <https://fctc.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240041769>

We also use this opportunity to call on the other non-FCTC Parties in the Afro Region to follow the Malawi example.

Congratulations Malawi!!!

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The African Tobacco Control Alliance (ATCA) is a non-profit, non-political Pan-African network of civil society organizations headquartered in Lome, Togo. With membership in 39 countries, ATCA is dedicated to promoting public health and curbing the tobacco epidemic in the continent. The alliance is an Observer to WHO-FCTC Conference of Parties. It has a Special Consultative Status with the UN ECOSOC, and is certified as a Public Charity organization by NGOsource.