SINGAPORE, 22 March 2012 – WHO Director-General **Margaret Chan** today urged the world to "stand shoulder to shoulder" against the
tobacco industry
's attempts to overturn Australia's new pathbreaking
tobacco control law
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The Australian law requires tobacco products to be sold in "plain packaging" – that is, drab packages with graphic images of tobacco-related diseases and without logos. Australia is the first country to require plain packaging.

"We must make plain packaging a big success so that it becomes the success of the world," Dr Chan told Professor Jane Halton, Secretary of Australia's Department of Health and Ageing, and other delegates to the 15th World Conference on Tobacco or Health taking place in Singapore.

Australia has been sued by tobacco giant Philip Morris Asia under a bilateral trade agreement with China, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region. Separately, it has been sued in domestic court by the tobacco industry.

Professor Halton promised that Australia will defend itself vigorously against both suits.

Dr Chan applauded Australia's determination in fighting tobacco industry intimidation.

"If we stand shoulder to shoulder, together, no tobacco industry can survive," Dr Chan said. "The fact that they are so desperate, I take it as an indication that the industry sees the writing on the wall. This is the death throe of the addicting industry."

Dr Chan and Professor Halton spoke at a session entitled, "Australia's plain packaging

experience".

The defence of Australia, and of other countries whose world-class tobacco control laws the tobacco industry is challenging, has been a constant theme of Dr Chan's at the conference.

In her keynote address on 20 March, Dr Chan said, "Tactics aimed at undermine anti-tobacco campaigns, and subverting the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, are no longer covert or cloaked by an image of corporate social responsibility. They are out in the open and they are extremely aggressive.

"The high-profile legal actions targeting Uruguay, Norway, Australia and Turkey are deliberately designed to instil fear in countries wishing to introduce similarly tough tobacco control measures."

Dr Chan pleaded with young people to "use your power" with online social networking to support Australia.

Approximately 2,600 people are attending the conference, of which WHO is an official technical and financial sponsor. The conference is scheduled to end on 24 March.