***WHO** urges national leaders to **fight against industry attacks***

**30 May 2012, GENEVA –** On World No Tobacco Day (31 May), the World Health Organization (WHO) is calling on national leaders to be extra vigilant against the increasingly aggressive attacks by the industry which undermine policies that protect people from the harms of tobacco. Tobacco kills almost 6 million people every year and is one of the leading preventable causes of illness and death around the world.

“In recent years, multinational tobacco companies have been shamelessly fuelling a series of legal actions against governments that have been at the forefront of the war against tobacco. The industry is now stepping out of the shadows and into court rooms,” says WHO Director-General Dr Margaret Chan. “We must now stand together with these governments that have had the courage to do the right thing to protect their citizens.”

More countries are moving to fully meet their obligations under the 2003 WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC). Governments are working to create 100% smoke-free, enclosed work and public places; to inform the public of tobacco harms through large and strong pictorial warning on tobacco packages; and to ban tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship. The tobacco industry however, is hard at work to undermine the treaty, including taking governments to court. In fact, the governments of Australia, Norway and

Uruguay are currently battling tobacco industry law suits in their national courts.

Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC urges countries to protect public health policies from commercial and other vested interests of the tobacco industry. On World No Tobacco Day, WHO is releasing a technical resource paper and global brief based on 2008 guidelines for implementation of this Article of the treaty to help guide countries on ways to combat tobacco industry interference. The paper covers a range of issues including:

- maneuvering to hijack the political and legislative process
- exaggerating the economic importance of the tobacco industry
- manipulating public opinion to gain the appearance of respectability
- fabricating support through front groups
- discrediting proven science
- intimidating governments with litigation or the threat of litigation.

“National leaders need to resist these tactics and use the full force of the Convention to protect the hard won gains to safeguard people’s health from the scourge of tobacco,” says Dr Douglas Bettcher, Director of WHO’s Tobacco Free Initiative department.

In line with article 5.3 countries should, among other measures: limit interactions and disclose all meetings with the tobacco industry; reject partnerships and non-binding agreements with the industry; refuse funds and other support, and reject industry endorsement and participation in youth initiatives.

In addition, countries should not grant incentives, privileges or benefits to the tobacco industry, such as subsidies or tax exemptions, and should create firewalls against the interference of the tobacco industry in public health, including State-owned tobacco companies.

Tobacco kills up to half its users. By 2030, WHO estimates that tobacco will kill more than 8 million people every year, with four out of five of these deaths occurring in low and middle-income countries. Tobacco is a major risk factor for non-communicable diseases (NCDs) such as cancer, cardio vascular disease, diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases. NCDs account for 63% of all deaths worldwide.

In nonsmokers, exposure to secondhand smoke is estimated to kill another 600,000 people annually. Almost half of all children regularly breathe air polluted by tobacco smoke and more than 40% of children have at least one smoking parent. In 2004, children accounted for nearly one third of deaths attributable to secondhand smoke.

Most adult smokers started the habit before the age 20. To recruit new smokers, the industry's relentless marketing machinery targets youth, especially young women.

The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control is the first international treaty negotiated under the auspices of WHO. It was adopted in 2003 and now has 175 Parties.

On World No Tobacco Day 2012, and throughout the following year, WHO will urge countries to put the fight against tobacco industry interference at the heart of their efforts to control the global tobacco epidemic.