



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cancer organizations from around the world join forces to prevent tobacco-related cancer

(February 4th, 2017, New York, USA) - World Cancer Day sees the official launch of Prevent20, a global coalition of cancer organizations committed to engaging with governments to secure increases in tobacco taxes as a cancer prevention strategy. The coalition aims to reduce tobacco use in order to prevent the 1.93 million tobacco-related cancer deaths that occur each year. The World Health Organization (WHO) target of reducing smoking prevalence by 30 percent by 2025 would result in at least 173 million fewer smokers by 2025 and at least 38 million fewer deaths.

High tobacco taxes and prices are the single most effective and cost-efficient but least well utilized strategy to reduce tobacco use. When tobacco is less affordable, it deters youth from initiating tobacco use and encourages current tobacco users to cut down and quit. Health economists from the American Cancer Society (ACS) have calculated that world average cigarette prices will need to quadruple by 2025 to deliver WHO's target reduction in smoking prevalence, requiring significant excise tax increases. A side benefit will be an increase in global tobacco tax revenue, to an estimated 800 billion international dollars annually. These funds should also be leveraged towards improvements in health systems and health care – including cancer care.

The Prevent20 coalition is launching with 24 members representing every continent of the world. Members are joining to provide and to benefit from the coalition's combined knowledge and expertise, so any cancer organization can become a successful advocate for this important health policy. Tobacco is a risk factor for a wide range of cancers, so every cancer organization is encouraged to join the coalition, irrespective of their current level of involvement or knowledge of this issue. Cancer organizations can find out more and join the coalition via its newly-launched website at wecanprevent20.org.

The American Cancer Society is a member of the coalition and provides technical support including tools, fact sheets and advice to other members, governments and other civil society organizations. Ambassador Sally Cowal, senior vice president of global cancer control for ACS, urges fellow cancer organizations to join Prevent20: "High tobacco taxes are an under-implemented cancer prevention strategy. Cancer organizations and health advocates have a voice and influence that can help to counter the tobacco industry, which always stands in the way of tax increases that would be beneficial to health. We are trusted experts in our countries, and should be actively engaging with governments that have the power to effect this policy. On this issue, we can make a real difference. Even if a cancer organization has never looked at this issue before, or has not been involved in advocacy for tobacco taxes, there is a global network of cancer community colleagues ready to advise and help. This World Cancer Day, we encourage every cancer expert to put tobacco taxes on their agenda and join the Prevent20 coalition."

Olga Santamaria de Fernández, President of the Liga Colombiana Contra El Cáncer (Colombian League Against Cancer), another coalition member confirmed: "Individual cancer organizations can't stop preventable cancer, but our experience

shows that a powerful network can achieve great results. To advocate for higher tobacco taxes in Colombia, the Liga joined forces with other experts and advocates and sought input from international experts. Together, we gathered the evidence, developed the materials, nurtured the relationships with government and implemented a strategic plan of engagement. It worked. At the end of 2016, Colombia's parliament agreed to increase tobacco taxes for the next three years, potentially delivering a 20 percent decrease in cigarette sales. We are proud to have engaged in this work and encourage other cancer organizations to become advocates for high tobacco taxes in their country.”

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Notes to Editors

To find out more, please visit wecanprevent20.org or Twitter @wecanprevent20

For further information or to arrange an interview with a Prevent20 coalition member, please contact Tracey Johnston, Vital Strategies, at +44.7889.081.170 or tjohnston@vitalstrategies.org