



From **Eric Piras**

Friday 3rd July 2015

**Submission to Panel on Health Services, Legislative Council of HKSAR
On "Legislative proposals to strengthen tobacco control".**

1. There is a natural restriction on the availability of cigars: due to their high retail price and specific retail channel, cigars are not easily accessible and can therefore not be considered in the same way as mass products.

Personal note: in my 20 years of business in the cigar industry, I never met or saw a consumer smoking 20 cigars a day! Not only does it take a lot of time, it would also be very costly.

2. Cigars are a very different type of product from cigarettes: cigars are in the luxury category and cannot be found as easily. Additionally, cigars do not target young people.

A premium cigar costs a minimum of HK\$100 per piece and requires at least 20 minutes of smoking time, 30 to 40 minutes on average. Cigars can therefore only be purchased by a certain category of population which can afford the money and the time.

3. Cigar boxes display several guarantees of authenticity. Covering totally (85%) the box or pack of cigars with graphic health warning will "de-facto" be negative: it goes the exact opposite way of consumers' protection. If the consumers are denied the right to check the authenticity of the products, then it becomes a big opportunity for counterfeit which will obviously increase health issues to consumers.

4. In my opinion, it would be more efficient and resourceful to maintain the current WHO guidelines on Health Warning and messages, so to keep the current size in HK.

The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control's guideline on health warnings and messages recommends: "should be 50% or more, but no less than 30%". HK is currently fulfilling these guidelines.