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To: Subcommittee on Smoking (Public Health) (Notices) (Amendment) Order 2017
From: Professor Samuel Yeung Shan WONG, JC School of Public Health and Primary Care,
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Date: 11 May 2017

Re: Support to Strengthen Tobacco Control Measures

Cigarette smoking causes millions of premature deaths and tremendous financial loss each year. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), about six million people killed by tobacco each year, with five million directly related to tobacco, while one tenth of them are non-smokers who are exposed to second-hand smoke.

Of the measures in fighting against tobacco use, pictorial health warnings on cigarette pack area can significantly raise the awareness of harms of cigarettes and have effects in stopping youths from starting smoking and encouraging smokers to quit. Larger pictorial warnings are significantly more effective than smaller, text-only messages. Significant proportion of adults and youth smokers report that large text and pictorial health warnings have reduced their consumption levels, increased their likelihood of quitting, increased their motivation to quit and increased the likelihood of remaining abstinent following a quit attempt.

Sixteen countries have successfully increased warnings signs to cover more than 60% of the overall package space. We strongly believe and support Hong Kong to increase the warning sizes to control tobacco use more effectively.

All warnings are subject to 'wear-out' over time, although larger pictorial warnings sustain their effects longer. Besides increasing the size of warning signs on the packages, it is also important to maintain the effect by introducing new warning signs and messages regularly, e.g. follow the WHO's Guidelines recommend to establish more sets of health warnings and messages and alternate after a specified period. Thus twelve or even more warning signs, especially larger pictorial signs are warranted in Hong Kong, and they can

alternate after a specified period to maintain the effect. Besides, monitoring its effectiveness, e.g. through smoking rates and number of smokers who choose to quit, after the proposal is taken effect is helpful.

In light of the above and facts of health effects by tobacco use, we support the proposal of:

(i) Enlarging the size of pictorial health warnings to at least 85% of the cigarette pack area and increasing the number of forms of health warning to twelve or more;

Additionally, we encourage the monitoring and evaluation on the effect of larger size warning pictures, and consider design more sets of larger size warning pictures.



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