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In reply please
refer to:

Your reference:

Professor Joseph Lee Kok-long
Chairman, Panel on Health Services
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Legislative Council of the Hong Kong
Special Administrative Region of the
People's Republic of China
Legislative Council Secretariat
1 Legislative Council
Hong Kong (région administrative spéciale de
Chine)

13 March 2017

Dear Professor Lee,

In June 2015, and October 2016, I had the honour to write and congratulate the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (SAR) on its ongoing progress in the field of tobacco control and to offer my full support as the Government updates graphic health warnings and increases their size.

As I understand it, the proposal to enlarge graphic health warnings from 50% to 85% of the principal display areas of packaging is still under consideration. Accordingly, I am again writing to offer my full support as Hong Kong SAR strengthens this important tobacco control measure.

I am happy to share my enthusiasm for the proposed changes to the current graphic health warnings, particularly in light of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC). As Guidelines to Article 11 of the Convention recognize, “evidence demonstrates that the effectiveness of health warnings and messages increases with their prominence.” This is reflected in rapid advances in tobacco packaging and labelling around the globe. Large warnings are becoming the norm and Hong Kong (SAR) would join a leading group. Countries within this group include Nepal (90%), India (85%), Thailand (85%), Australia (82.5%), Sri Lanka (80%), Uruguay (80%), Brunei (75%) and Canada (75%).

Other jurisdictions are also going further than Hong Kong SAR’s proposal. Following Australia’s lead in 2012, France and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland began implementation of tobacco plain packaging, alongside large graphic warnings, in May 2016. Hungary, Ireland, New Zealand and Norway have passed plain packaging laws while Canada, Slovenia and Thailand are considering draft legislation, and other countries have announced plans to implement plain packaging.

cc: The Director-General, Department of International Cooperation, National Health and Family Planning Commission of China, Beijing
The Permanent Representative of the People’s Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other International Organizations in Switzerland

The lessons learnt during the last years of implementing larger graphic warnings include the critical need for applying such warnings on all tobacco products. Despite predictable tobacco industry opposition, these recent developments confirm the merits of Hong Kong SAR enlarging tobacco health warnings.

You have my personal support and that of WHO as you take this forward.

Yours sincerely,



Dr Margaret Chan
Director-General