Tobacco Plain Packaging

GLOBAL STATUS UPDATE





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Executive summary

The World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC)¹ obliges Parties to implement effective packaging and labelling measures (Article 11) and a comprehensive ban (or restrictions) on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship (Article 13). Guidelines for the Implementation of Articles 11 and 13 recommend that Parties consider adopting plain packaging of tobacco products.

In 2012, Australia became the first country to require all tobacco products to be sold in plain packaging. Since then, France, Hungary, Ireland, New Zealand, Norway and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland have implemented plain packaging laws, while Burkina Faso, Canada, Georgia, Romania, Slovenia and Thailand have passed enabling laws. As this update went to press, Uruguay also published plain packaging laws. A number of other governments have legislative proposals or publicly announced policy processes to introduce plain packaging.

Plain (or standardized) packaging is defined as "measures to restrict or prohibit the use of logos, colours, brand images or promotional information on packaging other than brand names and product names displayed in a standard colour and font style".² The objectives of plain packaging include:

- 1. reducing the attractiveness of tobacco products;
- 2. eliminating tobacco packaging as a form of advertising and promotion;
- 3. eliminating misleading information by addressing package design techniques that may suggest that some products are less harmful than others; and
- 4. increasing the noticeability and effectiveness of health warnings.

These objectives contribute to the broader goal of protecting health by reducing demand for tobacco products.

Plain packaging is recommended to be introduced as part of a comprehensive approach to tobacco control, including large graphic health warnings and comprehensive bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship. Plain packaging will not be able to solve the tobacco epidemic on its own, it should be introduced as part of a comprehensive tobacco control strategy, as proposed in the WHO FCTC.

Certain core elements form part of any plain packaging implementation strategy. This update provides:

- an overview of global progress on the implementation of plain packaging (Part 2);
- the key elements of plain packaging legislation (Part 3);
- a comparative analysis of the regulations of governments that have implemented plain packaging to date (Part 4);
- a brief outline of litigation to date on plain packaging laws (Part 5); and
- examples of plain packaging of cigarettes (Annex).

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