

# Over one billion people will be smoking in 2025

But with better alternatives to cigarettes, there is an opportunity to actually reach the global non-communicable diseases target.

## PMI's views on the Eighth Session of the Conference of the Parties (COP8) to the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC):

Cigarette smoking is the worst form of tobacco consumption. According to the WHO, over seven million people die each year from diseases linked to smoking. Tobacco control strategies in most countries have focused on measures to prevent initiation and encourage cessation, and through the work of the World Health Organization (WHO)'s Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), smoking prevalence has declined 4.1%<sup>1</sup> between 2005 and 2015. We recognize the significant role the Convention is playing in driving policy to reduce smoking around the world.

Yet despite these efforts, millions of people who understand the risks continue to smoke cigarettes. The baseline scenario, according to WHO estimates, is that over one billion people will be smoking well into the next decade. Smoking prevalence, which was estimated at 22.7% in 2010, has been in constant decline for several decades. Data that the WHO collects show that annually on average only 2.5%<sup>2</sup> of smokers quit, which means that the vast majority of smokers will continue to smoke.

At that pace, it would take almost 100 years until smoking is a thing of the past. It is these hundreds of millions of men and women who stand to gain the most from less harmful alternatives. Because there is an alternative scenario – one in which people who would otherwise continue to smoke

instead abandon cigarettes and switch to less harmful alternatives. In this scenario the decline in smoking prevalence can significantly exceed the predicted rates of cessation.

The landscape of tobacco and nicotine products has evolved significantly over recent years. Not all tobacco products are the same with respect to their health risks. Moreover, rapid innovation offers opportunities to accelerate the downward trajectory of smoking prevalence.

For example, nearly 40 million people are now using e-cigarettes<sup>3</sup> that tobacco and vaping companies have made available to consumers. For our part, PMI is developing and selling a range of smoke-free products. As of today, approximately six million people have switched from cigarettes to our heated tobacco products. The movement of smokers to alternative products can be seen through unprecedented declines in cigarette sales in countries such as Japan and the United Kingdom. This signals great potential for change also in other geographies. Indeed, we have stated that our future is smoke-free and that our core business objective is to stop selling cigarettes entirely by offering our consumers everywhere on the globe smoke-free alternatives.

To be clear: smoke-free products are not a complete solution to the problems related to tobacco consumption. They are not risk free and are addictive. Quitting any tobacco and nicotine product is the best option for health; and people, most importantly youth, should be dissuaded from starting to use any tobacco- or nicotine-containing products in the first place.

1. WHO global report on trends in prevalence of tobacco smoking 2000-2025, 2018.  
2. WHO global report on trends in prevalence of tobacco smoking 2000-2025, 2018.  
3. Euromonitor International. Tobacco database for Vapour Products 2018.

Today, there is more and more scientific evidence that a range of products — e-cigarettes, heated tobacco technologies, and other smoke-free alternatives — are, for people who smoke and for those who care about them, a better alternative than cigarettes. For this reason, multiple national health authorities are interested in the role that alternative products can have within a comprehensive tobacco policy. In other words, “tobacco harm reduction” is no longer a concept; it is a concrete, important companion to other elements of tobacco policy.

This October, the participants at the 8th Conference of the Parties have the opportunity to consider additional measures to reducing smoking prevalence and, in turn, decrease morbidity and mortality among smokers. Policies that encourage adult smokers who would otherwise continue smoking to switch to better alternatives can further bring down smoking prevalence – complementing the existing FCTC toolkit and moving even more people away from cigarettes.

Appropriate regulatory oversight of these products could help decrease premature deaths from tobacco use and achieve international targets for combatting non-communicable diseases.

Consistent with the goal to leave cigarettes behind, we are sharing our views on COP8 with the Parties, the WHO, the FCTC, and the public health community. In brief, we respectfully submit that:

- Policies must continue to dissuade minors, ex-smokers, and non-smokers from using tobacco- and nicotine-containing products, while making better alternatives to cigarettes available to adults who smoke.
- Tobacco control policies should encompass tobacco-harm reduction strategies as well as supply and demand measures that encourage smokers who would otherwise continue to smoke to switch to better alternatives.

- There should be thorough, independent verification of manufacturers’ products and science to assess how e-cigarettes and novel and emerging tobacco and nicotine products can support policies to reduce smoking prevalence.
- There should be national and global surveillance systems to study market trends. This surveillance should include data on product usage, including switching rates associated with different tobacco and nicotine products, to enable accurate reporting of smoking prevalence and of the use of e-cigarettes and novel and emerging tobacco products.
- Legislative frameworks should keep shaping investment and continuous research and development of less harmful alternatives by private companies. This should clearly include the establishment of quality and performance standards for smoke-free products.
- Mechanisms should be established to enable transparent interaction and consultation between governments and producers of emerging tobacco and nicotine products in order to accomplish and accelerate the objective of the treaty.

The FCTC has continuously explored new ways to reduce smoking. Now, by combining existing prevention and cessation measures with the policy of harm reduction for tobacco products, the Parties can enhance the impact of the Convention, including by moving tobacco companies away from cigarettes. As a result, global smoking rates could be reduced at a more rapid pace and contribute to the global non-communicable diseases objectives.

We welcome any interest from public health experts, governments, and civil society in verifying our commitments and efforts.