

With such contentions in mind, FOMCA strongly calls for;

- The establishment of a National Policy on Tobacco Control which enables an integrated, inter-ministerial approach to streamline and complement the FCTC.
- The promotion and practice of good governance in the formation of proposed measures, procedures and guidelines for the implementation of FCTC protocols.
- The development of appropriate mechanisms to address long-term social economic implications of tobacco demand reduction strategies in particular measures to protect all persons from exposure to tobacco smoke.
- The government to take full responsibility of anti-smoking education without the involvement of the tobacco industry to conduct, finance, or participate in such campaigns.
- Anti-smoking education to include both young and adults and be a part of overall comprehensive tobacco control measures that include a comprehensive ban on all forms of tobacco advertising sponsorship and promotional activities, a ban on smoking in public and work place, and optimum tobacco taxation.
- Cooperation among neighbouring countries on cross border issues to align tobacco control measures, particularly on issues such as tobacco advertising and sponsorship activities and tobacco taxation policy.
- The recognition of the efforts and contributions of NGOs and members of the civil society such as health professionals, consumer groups, women groups, and environmental and health activists to tobacco control nationally and globally.
- The government to adopt a strong political commitment to develop and support national, regional and international multisectoral measures and coordinated responses on tobacco control.



In our endeavour to fight for better tobacco control, FOMCA is committed to;

- **Persistently lobby for better and stronger tobacco control legislation and enforcement.**
- **Consistently raise consumer awareness on the hazards of tobacco consumption and promote healthy and sustainable quality living through community programs.**
- **Actively mobilise the civil society movement against tobacco consumption through strengthening local networks and establishing international interaction.**



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Federation of Malaysian Consumers Associations (FOMCA)

**FOMCA's
Position
Paper
on**

**TOBACCO
CONTROL
in Malaysia**

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FOMCA is a voluntary, non-profit, non-political and civic organisation that champions for the rights and interests of all consumers through research, education, advocacy and representational activities.



FOMCA'S Position On Tobacco Control In Malaysia

The Constitution of the World Health Organization (WHO) states that the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic and social condition. The good health of the people is of primary importance to the growth and prosperity the nation. Consumption of cigarettes and tobacco products has long been proven hazardous to health; leading to a plethora of serious health problems.

Smokers in Malaysia have gone up over the past years despite the implementation of mass anti-smoking campaigns by the government. The National Health Survey 2004 showed that 23.2 percent of adults smoked and in 2005, the local press have highlighted that one in four aged 13-17 have picked up smoking with an alarming rising trend of young female smokers.

While the Malaysian government has pledged its commitments to promote healthy living and discourage smoking, on the flip side, it is disappointing to note that they have opted to engage with tobacco companies and collaborate with them in promoting anti-smoking campaigns. The Confederation of Malaysian Tobacco Manufacturers has acknowledged its past collaboration with the government in launching several youth anti-smoking campaigns. Health activists are questioning the government's half-hearted measures in tobacco control and the tobacco industry's involvement in the orchestration of anti-smoking campaigns which contrastingly leads to an increasing prevalence of smokers.

Malaysia has signed the Framework Convention for Tobacco Control in September 2003 and ratified it in September 2005. Healthcare and anti-smoking activists in Malaysia have been pushing and lobbying feverishly to the government to take a firm stand on its commitments on promoting good health and discouraging smoking. The government is often criticised for being lax in their enforcement on tobacco legislations and allegedly practising selective implementation of regulations in favour of tobacco industries. In the last 30 or more years, Malaysia's history of tobacco control is pockmarked with the failures of adopting an ad hoc policy and working with the tobacco industry to curb smoking; favouring industry guidelines over legislations and protecting tobacco cultivation.

The priority seems to be in favour of the 13,000 odd local tobacco farmers and the tobacco industry rather than the number of 10,000 who died annually due to tobacco consumption.

To further aggravate the situation, the Malaysian government is issuing licenses to companies to produce cigarettes locally amidst the predominant foreign brands in the market. More local brands such as John, Saat and Bromax are springing up in the market. Costing as low as RM 2.60 per packet of 20, it is even cheaper than a pack of 10 for premium brand cigarettes. With annual tariff increase on imported cigarettes, such a low pricing will undoubtedly promote tobacco consumption particularly among youths; which they can now afford. Low price cigarettes have gained a tremendous following and are undermining the efforts to reduce the number of smokers. Though currently Malaysia has banned smoking in schools, hospitals, government buildings and public areas, the weak and almost non-existent enforcement for anti-smoking legislation is jeopardising the lives of millions of Malaysians particularly innocent non-smokers who involuntarily inhales secondhand smokes. The lack of a comprehensive national tobacco control policy and stricter legislations on smoking and tobacco products are also contributing factors to the rising prevalence of smokers.

Neighbouring countries such as Thailand and Singapore have strong measures and commitments to control the tobacco industry which includes anti-smoking campaigns among youths without the participation from tobacco companies have shown significant success in decreasing the prevalence of smoking. Singapore today has among the lowest adult smoking prevalence in the world. Since 1971, Singapore has banned all forms of tobacco advertising and recently, it has further tightened up its tobacco control measures to ban smoking even in outdoor eateries.