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## UICC CALLS FOR THE STRICT REGULATION OF E-CIGARETTES TO PROTECT YOUTH

**27 May 2020, Geneva, Switzerland** – As the world marks World No Tobacco Day on 31<sup>st</sup> May, the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) expresses concern at the rise in the prevalence of youth vaping and calls for a strict regulation of the ingredients, age limits and other aspects of sales and distribution of e-cigarettes. There is a growing body of research that shows that they are unhealthy products designed to be addictive and facilitate first-time tobacco smoking.

These developments are all the more worrisome as the world is in the grip of the coronavirus pandemic. Smoking is a contributing factor for a number of pre-existing health conditions that have been proved to make people more vulnerable to COVID-19, while e-cigarettes have been found to have damaging effects on the respiratory tracks and the heart.

The e-cigarette market is growing at a rapid pace, with a current global worth estimated at nearly USD20bn, up from under USD7bn just five years ago. There is also a documented rise in e-cigarette use among youth populations (from 1.5% in 2011 to 11.7% in 2018 in the US) and the potential for associated lung injury in adolescents and young adults.

This growth is due to a general lack of information about the product and heavy marketing around the flavours included in vaping products. Because research has shown that people who vape are more likely to take up combustible smoking than never-smokers, this threatens to erode progress made in many countries in reducing the prevalence of smoking.

Results from the recent International Public Opinion Survey on Cancer released by UICC this year on World Cancer Day indicate a concerning trend, with younger people surveyed (those under 35 years old) appearing less likely to recognise tobacco use (58%) as a cancer risk factor than those aged over 50 (71%).

“Given the current evidence, we would strongly recommend that countries take a strict regulatory approach to e-cigarettes as they do with all other tobacco products, especially to protect young people,” said Dr Cary Adams, CEO of UICC. “The ongoing global public health crisis is the result of a disease characterised by acute respiratory syndromes: I would say that there is no more appropriate time to make significant progress on tobacco control.”

Globally, the prevalence of smoking among men dropped from 43% in 2000 to 34% in 2015 and from 11% to 6% for women. According to WHO, the tobacco industry and its marketing tactics to hide the dangers of smoking and target youth constitute a major impediment to a sharper decline, particularly in low- to middle-income countries.

Indeed, tobacco use negatively impacts economies and smoking remains a serious threat to public health. “An unregulated or poorly regulated e-cigarette market will only deepen and prolong this crisis by placing it in the control of an industry whose interests lie in expanding its consumer base and which continues to use common tactics to do so,” said Cary Adams.

The coronavirus pandemic has shown the ability of governments to mobilise resources and enforce regulations when a health issue threatens the lives of its people. Authorities and international agencies should therefore act now to stop a new nicotine epidemic before it takes hold in society.

Actions should include: strict regulation of e-cigarettes; mandate the disclosure of ingredients; use taxation as an effective tool to reduce the prevalence of vaping and smoking; ban advertising and sales to minors, with particular attention on monitoring social media channels; and ensure that e-cigarettes are not presented to youth as 'safe' or 'low risk'.

HRH Princess Dina Mired of Jordan, President of UICC, said: "We need to act before it's too late. Let's not make the same mistake we made with combustible cigarettes and condemn yet another generation to illness and shortened unhealthy lives. Insanity is repeating the same actions and expecting different results: let's err on the side of sanity."

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### About the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC)

The Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) is the largest and oldest international cancer-fighting organisation. Founded in Geneva in 1933, UICC has over 1,160 member organisations in 173 countries. It enjoys consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and has official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) and the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC). UICC has over 50 partners, including associations, companies and foundations committed to the fight against cancer. UICC is a founding member of the NCD Alliance, the McCabe Centre for Law & Cancer, the International Cancer Control Partnership (ICCP) and established the City Cancer Challenge Foundation in January 2019.

UICC's mission is to both unite and support the cancer community in its efforts to reduce the global cancer burden, promote greater equity and ensure that cancer control remains a priority on the global health and development agenda. It pursues these goals by bringing together global leaders through innovative and far-reaching cancer-control events and initiatives, building capacities to meet regional needs and developing awareness campaigns.

More information is available at [www.uicc.org](http://www.uicc.org).

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