

AFRICA UNITE!
FREE THE AIR
THIS WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY
SAY NOT TO TOBACCO



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Leonce Sessou – sessou@atca-africa.org

Tobacco and Lung Health: Comprehensive tobacco control policies are required to prevent lung diseases in Africa.

Statement of Deowan Mohee, Executive Secretary, African Tobacco Control Alliance (ATCA)

Lome, 31 May, 2019

Today, we are commemorating World No Tobacco Day, an annual event to encourage the adoption and implementation of strong and comprehensive tobacco control measures to save the lives of millions of people around the world from the devastating consequences of tobacco use. The theme chosen by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to mark this year's celebration is "Tobacco and Lung Health". It is a day that reminds us of the harm caused by tobacco to our health, and helps unleash more efforts to implement the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC).

Breathing is key for life and there is strong evidence suggesting that people who breathe cleaner air tend to live better and healthier lives. Meanwhile, tobacco smoke is known to be an enormous pollutant which contains more than [7,000 chemicals with 70 of them known to cause cancer](#). In Africa, among youth aged 13-15 years, more than [16 million are exposed to second-hand smoke at home while 30 million are exposed outside the home](#). With the number of smokers on the continent increasing from about 84 million in 2000 to 208 million in 2030, exposure to tobacco smoke will represent an enormous challenge to governments if appropriate policy measures are not implemented in time.

At the same time, the African region has witnessed notable progress with regards to the creation of smoke-free environments. Among countries that have [adopted measures to protect people from tobacco smoke in public places](#), twenty two have a complete ban on smoking in government buildings, and twenty four have a complete ban on smoking in health care and educational facilities. Twenty-seven countries have a complete ban on smoking in ground public transport, and 15 have complete smoking ban in restaurants.

There is no safe level of exposure to tobacco smoke. It affects both smokers and non-smokers. [Smokers are up to 22 times more likely to develop lung cancer in their lifetime](#), compared to non-smokers; and non-smokers exposed to second-hand smoke at home or in the workplace have a [30% higher risk of developing lung cancer](#). Both maternal and paternal smoking slow lung growth in children and cause lower respiratory tract illnesses such as bronchitis and pneumonia, particularly during the first year of life.

This year's celebration calls for coordinated actions for a full implementation of the WHO FCTC, the only way to improve the health and well-being of people, and save lives. We all have a right to a healthy environment and must help enforce comprehensive smoke-free policies and adopt tobacco-free lifestyles. Authorities must make tobacco control a national priority and put more efforts to enact and implement strong tobacco control measures. Also, civil society must be considered as an active partner in supporting governments and watchdogging the tobacco industry's interference in tobacco control.



*breathe
Africa!*