



Applications for the status of observer to the Conference of the Parties

Report by the Convention Secretariat

Purpose of the document

This report provides information to the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control on applications for the status of observer to the COP and the related recommendation of the Bureau of the COP.

Action by the Conference of the Parties

The COP is invited to note the present report and consider adopting the annexed draft decision on whether the applications for observer status should be granted or rejected.

Contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): All SDGs; in particular, SDG 3 and Target 3.a.

Link to Workplan and Budget item: 2.1.4.1. and 2.2.1.1.

Additional financial implications if not included in the Workplan and Budget: None.

Related document(s): Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

Background

1. Applications by international intergovernmental organizations (IGOs) are governed by Rule 30.1 of the Rules of Procedure of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), which states: “Any international intergovernmental organization may apply, in accordance with its internal rules, to the Secretariat for observer status, which may be granted by the Conference of the Parties, based on the report from the Secretariat, taking into account the 17th and 18th preambular paragraphs as well as Article 5.3 of the Convention. Such applications, duly endorsed by the governing body of the organization concerned, should be submitted to the Secretariat not later than ninety days before the opening of the session.”
2. Applications by international and regional nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are governed by Rule 31.2 of the Rules of Procedure of the COP, which states: “Other international and regional nongovernmental organizations whose aims and activities are in conformity with the spirit, purpose and principles of the Convention, may apply for observer status, which may be granted by the Conference of the Parties, based on the report of the Secretariat, and taking into account the 17th and 18th preambular paragraphs as well as Article 5.3 of the Convention. Such applications should be submitted to the Secretariat not later than ninety days before the opening of the session.”
3. In accordance with Rules 24ter.1(f) and 24ter.1(g) of the Rules of Procedure of the COP, the Bureau of the COP shall review the applications of IGOs and NGOs that apply for observer status and make recommendations in that regard to the COP.
4. In decision FCTC/COP8(1), the COP adopted an indicative list of criteria to guide the Bureau of the COP in analysing applications for observer status and mandated the Bureau to use those criteria in recommending to the COP whether to grant or reject applications from organizations applying for observer status. In accordance with the COP decision, any organization that meets at least one of the following exclusionary criteria will not be granted observer status:

A. For international intergovernmental organizations

- A.1 when the work of the IGO does not contribute to the implementation and purpose of the WHO FCTC;
- A.2 where there is evidence that the organization has accepted funding from and/or has a vested interest in the tobacco industry;

B. For nongovernmental organizations

- B.1 when the organization’s activities are limited to the national scope;
- B.2 when the organization has accepted funding from and/or has a vested interest in the tobacco industry; and
- B.3 when the organization is affiliated with the tobacco industry, taking into account the 17th and 18th preambular paragraphs, as well as Article 5.3, of the WHO FCTC.

5. By the deadline of 19 August 2025, the Convention Secretariat received, through the online submission portal on the WHO FCTC website, two applications for IGO observer status and eight applications for NGO observer status.

Applications by international intergovernmental organizations

African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF)

6. ATAF is a tax organization with 44 member countries. It is dedicated to providing policy and technical tax support. ATAF provides support to member countries in designing and implementing effective tobacco taxation policies, while also working to strengthen excise tax administration across the continent. Granting observer status to ATAF would allow the organization to contribute meaningfully to discussions on the implementation of the WHO FCTC. Observer status would also enhance its capacity to support African countries in aligning with global standards, while addressing unique regional challenges they face in tobacco control and taxation.

7. Based on the information provided by the applicant, the Bureau recommends to the COP that observer status be granted to ATAF.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)

8. UNODC's mission is to contribute to global peace and security, human rights and development by making the world safer from drugs, crime, corruption and terrorism. UNODC has been an accredited observer to the Meeting of the Parties (MOP) to the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products since its third session. UNODC is a leading entity in addressing cross-border criminal issues, and as the guardian of the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the United Nations Convention Against Corruption is well placed to contribute to the work of the COP and to further promote collaboration in implementing the Convention.

9. Based on the information provided by the applicant, the Bureau recommends to the COP that observer status be granted to UNODC.

Applications by nongovernmental organizations

Economics for Health

10. Based at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, Economics for Health conducts economic research to demonstrate the effects of existing policies, and charts pathways to new ones that promote healthier populations and more robust and equal economies. Economics for Health's main fields of work centre around Articles 6 and 15 of the WHO FCTC. It also examines many ancillary areas, which prominently include illicit trade, costs of tobacco use, effects of taxes on employment, progressivity of tobacco tax (and regressivity of tobacco use), tax and cessation, and tax and youth tobacco use initiation, among many others.¹

11. Based on the information provided by the applicant, the Bureau recommends to the COP that observer status be granted to Economics for Health.

¹ Economics for Health also applied for observer status to the MOP. Its application will be considered by the MOP at its fourth session; the Bureau of the MOP recommended that observer status be granted.

Applications by nongovernmental organizations that the Bureau recommends be rejected

12. The Bureau reviewed applications from the following organizations and concluded that the applications should be rejected under one of the following exclusionary criteria, per decision FCTC/COP8(1), and the Rules of Procedure of the COP: (1) its activities are limited to the national scope; (2) it has accepted funding from and/or has a vested interest in the tobacco industry; (3) it is affiliated with the tobacco industry, taking into account the 17th and 18th preambular paragraphs and Article 5.3 of the Convention;² (4) it has no tobacco control activities; or (5) it is neither an IGO nor a NGO, as established in the Rules of Procedure of the COP.

- (i) Association of Addiction Service Providers (APAS)
- (ii) Empower People for Better Future Foundation
- (iii) Global Climate Change Foundation (GCCF)
- (iv) Global Self-Care Federation (GSCF)
- (v) No More Butts
- (vi) Servicio Defensa Al Consumidor (SEDECO), Plurinational State of Bolivia
- (vii) Turkish Green Crescent Society

Action by the Conference of the Parties

13. The COP is invited to note the present report and consider adopting the annexed draft decision, as recommended by the Bureau.

² In respect of criteria (2) and (3), due diligence was undertaken to take into account decisions FCTC/COP6(9) and FCTC/COP7(9) in relation to the objective to protect tobacco-control activities from all commercial and other vested interests related to electronic nicotine delivery systems and electronic non-nicotine delivery systems (ENDS/ENNDS), reiterated in decision FCTC/COP10(11).

Annex

Draft decision:

Applications for the status of observer to the Conference of the Parties

The Conference of the Parties (COP),

Having considered the applications for observer status submitted and contained in document FCTC/COP/11/3,

DECIDES, in accordance with Rules 30 and 31 of its Rules of Procedure and pursuant to decision FCTC/COP8(1):

- (a) to grant observer status to:
 - (i) African Tax Administration Forum (ATAF)
 - (ii) Economics for Health
 - (iii) United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC)
- (b) to reject the application for observer status of the following organizations:
 - (i) Association of Addiction Service Providers (APAS)
 - (ii) Empower People for Better Future Foundation
 - (iii) Global Climate Change Foundation (GCCF)
 - (iv) Global Self-Care Federation (GSCF)
 - (v) No More Butts
 - (vi) Servicio Defensa Al Consumidor (SEDECO), Plurinational State of Bolivia
 - (vii) Turkish Green Crescent Society.
