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## **World Cancer Day: commercial interests drive millions of avoidable cancer deaths**

UICC calls on governments to prevent millions of cancer-related deaths due to tobacco use and the consumption of alcohol and ultra-processed foods through increased taxation, restricted advertising, improved labelling and public education.

**Monday 30 January 2022. Geneva, Switzerland.** The Union for International Control (UICC), which drives the campaign for **World Cancer Day** on 4 February, calls on governments around the world to prioritise four policy actions to reduce preventable cancers caused by tobacco use and the consumption of alcohol and ultra-processed foods including sugary beverages.

Nearly half of all deaths due to cancer – 4.45 million out of more than nine million in 2019 – **are caused by known modifiable risk factors**, with smoking, alcohol consumption and high body mass index (BMI) among the top three.

**Sugary drinks** and **ultra-processed foods** are known drivers of obesity, defined as a BMI above 30 and, like tobacco and alcohol, are **potentially addictive**. These products are marketed by companies whose **corporate interests often outweigh concerns for global health**.

“Millions of avoidable cancer deaths are caused by unhealthy products sold by heartless companies who interfere in policy debates and misuse science to secure a favourable commercial environment. As we celebrate World Cancer Day, UICC stands ready to support governments in their efforts to limit people’s exposure to tobacco, alcohol and ultra-processed food products.”

– **Cary Adams**, CEO of the Union for International Cancer Control

Given the growing burden of cancer globally and particularly in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs), UICC calls upon governments this World Cancer Day to strengthen their resolve and implement policies that severely restrict the ability of companies to market and sell their carcinogenic products.

In particular, UICC recommends four policy actions that have proved effective in reducing the availability and consumption of unhealthy products:



1. *Increase taxation:* **Studies in the US** show that a 10% increase in the price of cigarettes reduces adult consumption by 3-5%, and youth are up to three times more responsive than adults.
2. *Enforce marketing limitations*, including age restrictions and reduced points of sale. **A government analysis in the UK** showed that banning junk food advertising on TV before 9pm would result in £1.9 billion in public health benefits with reductions in obesity-related ill health over children's lifetimes.
3. *Improve labelling:* Impose product warning and information labels.
4. *Run extensive public education campaigns* to improve knowledge of risk factors, and further counter misleading advertising, **market promotion and policy interference**.

“Australia was one of the first countries to ban tobacco advertising and the first to impose plain packaging for cigarettes. These policies have led to less brand identification, lower acceptance of smoking, better perception of health risks, reduced uptake among youth and more adults quitting. Similar policies for alcohol and ultra-processed foods, aligned with the particular risks of these products, will help blunt the unscrupulous marketing strategies of some companies who target youth and other vulnerable populations with their unhealthy products.”

- **Prof. Jeff Dunn AO**, President of the Union for International Cancer Control

The aggressive marketing of unhealthy products also increases the differences in the number and severity of cancer cases and in cancer-related deaths around the world, both within countries and between high- and lower-income regions. **Vulnerable populations are more likely** to experience a higher cancer incidence and lower survival rates than others.

“Many governments know that their populations are targeted by companies eager to sell unhealthy products but their ambitions to curtail these actions are often met with resistance from industry actors, including legal challenges to effective policy measures and legislation. **Opposition to a sugar tax by manufacturers of sugary drinks**, stealing a page out of Big Tobacco's playbook, is just one example among many.”

- **Ulrike Årehed Kågström**, President-elect of UICC and Secretary General of the Swedish Cancer Society

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### ACCESS PRESS KIT

#### Factsheets on cancer, World Cancer Day, commercial determinants

*Press kit materials are also available on this page in Arabic, Chinese, French, German, Portuguese, Russian and Spanish.*

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## CONTACT

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

The Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) is the largest and oldest organisation in the world dedicated to the global fight against cancer. Founded in Geneva in 1933, UICC has over 1,200 member organisations in 172 countries and territories. 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 and the International Cancer Control Partnership (ICCP) and established the City Cancer Challenge Foundation in January 2019 and the Access to Oncology Medicines (ATOM) Coalition in May 2022.

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.

[www.uicc.org](http://www.uicc.org)

## **About World Cancer Day**

World Cancer Day takes place every year on 4 February and is the uniting global initiative under which the world comes together to raise the profile of cancer in a positive and inspiring way. Spearheaded by the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC), the day aims to save millions of lives each year by raising awareness and improving education about the disease while calling for action from governments and individuals across the world.

World Cancer Day 2023 is led by the theme "**Close the care gap**", recognising inequities in health that exist for many populations. This is the second of a three-year campaign on equity, to raise awareness about the lack of equity in cancer care and prompting action at every level



to break down the barriers that exist for many people in accessing services and receiving the care they need. The theme was informed by a report issued by UICC entitled “**The Social Determinants of Health and Cancer**”.

*For more information, please visit: [www.worldcancerday.org](http://www.worldcancerday.org)*

*For more information about specific country events, please visit: [www.worldcancerday.org/map](http://www.worldcancerday.org/map)*