When I wrote the Chair’s letter for the last annual report, the world had just begun to realise the seriousness of the COVID-19 virus and health authorities were scrambling to control its spread. None of us were prepared for the magnitude of the pandemic as it rapidly spread throughout 2020 or how we would have to adapt our lives in ways we could never have imagined prior. 2020 was heartbreaking, and really, really hard.

As an organisation, FCA was not spared from the immediate negative impacts of the pandemic as we negotiated funding losses and delays, uncertainty around previously scheduled events, planning in a chaotic and unknown environment and having to make incredibly difficult decisions to ensure our organisation survived. It was with much anguish that FCA farewelled several staff and I wish to express gratitude for their many years of service. Other staff reduced their hours to ensure the viability of the organisation and I acknowledge this sacrifice and thank them.

We are now understanding that COVID-19 has had major longer-term impacts on the environments in which we live and work. For tobacco control we are seeing: the public and political attention paid to the pandemic and the required response has resulted in interruptions to tobacco control programmes; cancellation/postponement of many meetings, international projects and initiatives, including COP, which rely on international travel; staff redeployed/reallocated from tobacco control or NCD files to support pandemic response efforts; and questions about future of funding for tobacco control programmes when governments face domestic budget pressures.

While exactly what a post-pandemic world will look like remains unclear – what is clear is that global tobacco control must be part of the agenda. Never has the need for preventive public health measures and evidence-based interventions such as those in the FCTC been more important as we work to ease the future burden on our decimated health systems.

We know that tobacco taxes, promoting the link between tobacco control and sustainable development, and regulating the tobacco industry are top priorities in a post-pandemic world.

FCA’s Strategic Plan expired in 2020 and discussion on possible changes to our governance structure was initiated several years ago. The circumstances of 2020 made it imperative this review of our organisation and strategic direction was progressed as a priority. We began consultation with members to determine our new strategic priorities and accompanying governance structure and have been very encouraged by the thoughtful input we have received and the overwhelming support from members for FCA’s future. Both these critical pieces of work will be completed in 2021.

While 2020 was a very difficult year and the start of 2021 is continuing to challenge our global community, if I focus in on FCA and our important work, I feel really positive about our future. Despite the challenges, FCA and its members achieved a great deal throughout 2020 and you will see highlights in this report. We’ve adapted and achieved major goals in our work plan, we started work to transition the organisation to meet future tobacco control needs and we used our expertise and experience to continue to lead thinking on global tobacco control strategy and policy. Most of this undertaken by FCA’s staff while in lockdown, working from home, home-schooling children and keeping family and friends safe – they have been superb, and I sincerely thank them for their dedication and professionalism.

We all know how important tobacco control is going to be once the pandemic is under control and we all know what needs to be done. How we do that in the very different world that is emerging is what we must work together to determine and action. FCA stands ready to play our part.
MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has reframed everything in global health, including tobacco control. It also forced FCA to reorient our work and reorganise ourselves in a virtual world. As with many organisations, the pandemic impacted FCA from a financial and organisational standpoint. You could say that 2020 was a transitional year for us as we needed to make some decisions for the future of the organisation and adapt to the changing tobacco control environment and in particular to the next phase of FCTC implementation. We started thinking internally and consulting externally on this, and the COVID-19 pandemic made the need for this refresh of FCA more urgent and necessary.

In addition, as COVID-19 spread across the globe, it became clear that it would be unsafe for everyone to gather in person for the November meetings of COP9 and MOP2 as originally planned. The decision was made to postpone both until late 2021. Despite these unexpected changes and delays, FCA and the global tobacco control community were able to adjust and adapt to a very different environment by doing work virtually. We supported a number of key initiatives under the FCTC, which will pave the way for productive discussions when COP9 and MOP2 take place in 2021.

During the time in which we would have attended COP9 and MOP2, we launched a week-long social media campaign to promote the different priorities from the tobacco control community. This included the need to augment efforts on FCTC implementation, the Global Strategy, and international cooperation. Throughout the week, we saw members sharing their priorities as well as governments address their national priorities. We published a series of think pieces and concluded with an important webinar on sustainable financing for tobacco control.

The chronic lack of adequate, sustainable funding remains a major obstacle to continued progress on FCTC implementation around the world. In 2020, FCA continued to advance the work of its informal coalition to address the low level of funding allocated to tobacco control. This included research and reflection on the role that the pandemic might play on development finance, in general and for tobacco control. We also commissioned a report to inform COP9 on potential fundraising strategies to address the global funding gap. This report will be launched in 2021.

Tobacco control programmes in low and middle income countries are also critically underfunded despite the relatively low cost of implementation and their demonstrated health and economic benefits. In an attempt to address this, we launched budget advocacy pilot projects in Uganda and Senegal starting with a multi-day training workshop in Senegal to provide our partners with the tools necessary to design and execute their advocacy plans. We also continued our work in the African region to promote tobacco taxation as a domestic revenue generation stream, seeing policy and legislation reforms over the three years of this project. We are excited to see the impact of both programmes in 2021, including introducing budget advocacy to new regions.

Despite all the challenges, FCA members and staff worked hard to advance tobacco control. I would like to thank the FCA team for the phenomenal work they did in 2020, despite the pandemic, our financial challenges and staff changes in the team. FCA’s Board also played vital role in ensuring continuity all while providing sound advice and guidance as we navigated through the various changes that took place within the alliance. Lastly, none of the work that we achieved this year would have been possible without the dedication and engagement of our members, so thank you.

Going forward, we have much work to do as an Alliance to ensure that we survive and thrive in 2021 and the years to come, and partnerships will be more important than ever. I am convinced that together we can achieve even more than we have in the past as we ensure that tobacco control is positioned in COVID-19 recovery and sustainable development discussions and I am excited to see where the next few years will take us as a community.
The ninth session of the Conference of the Parties (COP9) was slated to take place in November 2020 in The Hague, Netherlands. Two years after COP8 in Geneva. Early in the year FCA began a programme of work to support productive discussions at the COP focusing on a few key priorities identified in the COP’s strategic plan, the Global Strategy to Accelerate Tobacco Control. COP9 was to mark the first conference since the adoption of the Strategy. COP9 would have been a key opportunity to take stock of progress achieved over the previous two years.

As COVID-19 spread across the globe, it became clear that it would be unsafe and impossible for large international meetings like the COP to take place. The decision was made to postpone COP9 until late 2021. Much of the work that COP8 decided should take place between sessions to further the implementation of the treaty was also delayed or put on hold.

Despite these unexpected changes and delays, FCA and the global tobacco control community were able to adjust and adapt to a very different environment by doing work virtually. FCA supported a number of key initiatives under the FCTC, which will pave the way for productive discussions when COP9 does take place in 2021.

FCA members continued their support for the Strategy by contributing to the measurement of the Global Strategy indicators. FCA was called on to support data gathering for Indicator 2.2.1, which measures civil society involvement in national tobacco control approaches. Members and partners contributed information that covered 156 countries that are Party to the Treaty.

During COP8, a Party-driven pilot project was approved for an Implementation Review Mechanism (IRM), which FCA has directly supported since the start in 2019. This year, the IRM pilot process included stakeholder interviews with some FCA members as participants. FCA continued its participation as an observer in the Working Group to develop specific guidelines to address cross-border Tobacco Advertising, Promotion, and Sponsorship (TAPS) and the depiction of tobacco in the entertainment media under Article 13 of the WHO FCTC.
Raising awareness around the global funding gap for tobacco control

A chronic lack of adequate, sustainable funding remains a major obstacle to continued progress on FCTC implementation around the world. A 2018 study commissioned by FCA suggested that there is a US$27.4B gap between existing domestic and international resources and the required amount to achieve FCTC-compliant levels around the world. FCA has continued to build on past work by examining the size of the resource gap by raising global awareness of this problem, building pressure to address it, and conducting research and facilitating discussion to look for potential solutions.

According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), how levels and trends in Official Development Assistance will evolve over the coming months and years is unpredictable and will largely be a question of political will and global solidarity. While it’s possible that countries may increase their aid commitments in response to the pandemic, it is also possible that budget pressures at the national level could lead to a decline in aid levels. Further, while aid allocations to the health sector increased in the early months of the pandemic, it is not possible to know whether this trend will continue or to anticipate exactly how donor incentives may change as the pandemic progresses. At the same time, it has become clear that external finance will be critical in supporting COVID-19 response and recovery efforts in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Targeted campaigning for high-income countries (HICs) to invest in FCTC implementation, tailored to the HICs’ stated development priorities, remains a priority area of work for FCA in order to respond to the ongoing need in LMICs.

In 2020, FCA continued to serve as the Secretariat for an informal coalition of civil society organisations working to address the low level of funding allocated to tobacco control. This year, work with the coalition included research and reflection on the role that the COVID-19 pandemic might play on development finance and how it might affect chances of seeing tobacco control moved up the development agenda in donor countries. Discussion and reflection by the coalition led to a research paper that identifies opportunities for tobacco control amidst the new and changed environment due to COVID-19 and the associated policy response.

FCA also commissioned a report, with support from Cancer Research UK, to inform COP9 on potential fundraising strategies to address the global funding gap. It examined funding instruments that have been used for other international issues, including an assessment of the positive and negative aspects of each mechanism. This assessment includes an outline of the challenges to fully fund FCTC implementation and matches existing instruments with how well they address these challenges in order to make recommendations on which to pursue. The resulting recommendations were to pursue a combination of domestic resource mobilisation with a global-level pooled funding mechanism. The resulting report will be launched in 2021.
Boosting domestic investment in FCTC implementation in Senegal & Uganda

Tobacco control programmes in LMICs are critically underfunded despite the relatively low cost of implementation and their demonstrated health and economic benefits. In an attempt to address this, we launched budget advocacy pilot projects in 2019 in Uganda and Senegal in cooperation with Cancer Research UK and the American Cancer Society.

In early 2020, we conducted a multi-day budget advocacy training workshop in Senegal to provide our partners with the tools necessary to design and execute their advocacy plans to secure the level of resources required to run effective, FCTC-compliant tobacco control programmes as part of their country’s national budgeting procedures.

Following the workshop, the Senegalese coalition, which was given the name Taxawu Sante, and the Ugandan coalition developed strategic plans for their work and began to implement their campaigns by developing materials to communicate key messages, lobbying key stakeholders, organising events and participating in targeted media advocacy.

Due to COVID-19, both coalitions faced many challenges along the way, but were able to adapt their work to the current national situations by favouring the use of technology to coordinate and organise virtual meetings.

In Senegal, one notable activity was a workshop organised by The Taxawu Sante coalition and attended by representatives from the Ministries of Finance, Health and Customs. The workshop provided an opportunity for participants to discuss the role that raising taxes on tobacco and other health-harming products could play in raising revenue in Senegal. Taxawu Sante members advocated strongly for the use of revenue from these taxes to be put towards funding tobacco control programmes by creating a special fund for spending on social protection.

The Ugandan coalition (Technical Working Group) also made significant progress in building the capacity of its members to understand and conduct budget advocacy in Uganda. They also worked to sensitise additional stakeholders working in the area of NCD prevention and to prepare them to join the coalition in order to strengthen and amplify the group’s messaging and advocacy impact. Seeing that Uganda currently does not have a tobacco control programme, a vital aspect of their campaign has also been to engage the Ministry of Health on the importance of including costing for the tobacco control department in the tobacco control focal point planning papers. The TWG also engaged with the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development to discuss options for resource mobilisation, including through earmarking of tobacco taxation. Notably, the Ugandan coalition participated in the country’s budget conference, where civil society organisations are invited to voice their concerns and inputs in regard to the budget.

Both coalitions in Senegal and Uganda have been successful in engaging the media by sensitising journalists, providing opportunities to raise awareness and build public support for the need for tobacco control to be prioritised in national spending. Media engagement included coverage of the campaign in print and online media, guest spots for several key coalition members on various radio shows, and television interviews on the campaign and its objectives.

In 2021, we plan to work with our partners Senegal and Uganda to develop case studies that will document the coalitions’ experiences and lessons learned from the pilots. We are also working to develop a first-of-its-kind toolkit on budget advocacy for tobacco control, which will help advocates in other countries understand what budget advocacy is and how to adopt and apply this approach to improve the funding for and the sustainability of tobacco control efforts in their countries.
Prioritising FCTC implementation to achieve the SDGs in sub-Saharan Africa

Over the past three years, the Norwegian Cancer Society has provided generous funding to the FCA to support FCTC implementation via integration of tobacco control policies in national development plans in Sub-Saharan Africa. The first phase of the project in Chad, Ghana, Nigeria, Senegal and Uganda finished up at the end of 2020, and throughout the life of the project major progress has been made in terms of policy reform and legislation. Our members successfully advocated to attract support for recognition of FCTC implementation as a priority measure for achieving the SDGs and the importance of tobacco taxation as a development finance solution.

**NIGERIA**

The Nigerian Tobacco Control Alliance (NTCA) rolled out a tax advocacy campaign which resulted in:

- Tobacco control being integrated in the government’s SDG plan in 2018 and 2019 and subsequently fostering relationships between NTCA, the WHO, and the UNDP.
- The approval of the National Tobacco Control Regulations by the National Assembly in 2019, which stipulate that licensing fees for tobacco are to be paid into the National Tobacco Control Fund and used for the implementation of tobacco control related activities by the Nigerian Government.
- A commitment from the National Tobacco Control Committee to integrate tobacco control into their SDG work.

**GHANA**

Vision for Alternative Development (VALD) has been working for several years to position tobacco control as a development priority in Ghana. Although VALD experienced some challenges towards the end of its project due to the election taking place, they look forward to continuing work to:

- Engage the Deputy Minister of Health and the National Health Insurance to continue considering tax increases for health promotion during the National Meeting on NCDs.
- Meet with the National Development Planning Commission to discuss their proposal to mainstream tobacco taxes in the next 4-year development plan.

**SENEGAL**

The Ligue Sénégalaise de lutte contre le tabac (LISTAB) has played a vital role in initiating the discussion and engaging the government to prioritise tobacco control within the SDGs. Thanks to LISTAB’s important work:

- The Technical Advisor of the Ministry of Health committed to being both a champion and advocate for the increase of tobacco taxation.
- The Secretary General of the Government agreed to explore how to position tobacco control as a national priority as well the various types of tobacco taxation mechanisms that can be enacted.
Prioritising FCTC implementation to achieve the SDGs in sub-Saharan Africa

UGANDA

The Uganda National Health Consumers’ Organisation (UNHCO) developed a campaign to call on Uganda’s ministries, departments, and agencies to increase and earmark cigarette taxes to finance Universal Health Coverage (UHC) which resulted in:

- The amendment of Uganda’s 2020 Tobacco Control Act was put in place in order to include a taxation mechanism which will tax processed and unprocessed tobacco leaves exported out of Uganda at 0.8 dollars per kilogram.
- The Ministry of Finance, Planning, and Economic Development will include UNHCO arguments that position tobacco control as a priority. They will advocate for tobacco tax increases for health in the Domestic Revenue Mobilisation Strategy and the National Development Authority contained within the National Development Plan (NDP) iii.

CHAD

The Association pour la Défense des Consommateurs (ADC) had already mobilised decision-makers to recognise tobacco taxation as a solution to address sustainable development by including the taxation of tobacco products in the multi-sectorial strategic plan for tobacco control. Over the course of the grant period ADC successfully:

- Lobbied the government to allocate a specific percentage of tobacco taxes agreed in the 2019 finance law to the National Tobacco Control Programme, the National Committee Against Smoking, NCDs control/prevention programme, and UHC.
- Secured a meeting with the Ministries of Health and Finance to reach a consensus to allocate a specific percentage of tobacco taxes to the National Tobacco Control Programme, the National Committee Against Smoking, NCDs control/prevention programme, and UHC.
- Pushed for a 5% increase of the excise duty tax and the allocation of the specific tax of 100 XAF per pack of cigarettes to finance UHC to pass.

Though all of these countries were able to ensure that FCTC implementation is recognised as a best option to curb the burden of NCDs, there remains a need to continually engage the government on the progress being made towards achieving the SDGs. We look forward to continuing our work with our members in the region to roll out the next phase of the projects starting in 2021.
The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development affirmed that ensuring healthy lives and promoting well-being for all at all ages is a critical component of sustainable development and a priority for all governments and development stakeholders. Since then, much of the global health and tobacco control community’s work has been viewed through the lens of sustainable development.

FCA continued to devote significant time and effort in 2020 to projects and discussions that address these connections. Further, given that 80% of people who smoke live in LMICs, tobacco control needs to take the LMIC context and associated challenges into account in order to move forward. Sustainable development via tobacco control is paramount.

Throughout 2020, FCA continued to work to ensure that the role of the FCTC is recognised as part of the non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and development discussions. In February 2020, FCA attended the 3rd NCD Alliance (NCDA) Global Forum in Sharjah, UAE, where we co-led a session on global governance and binding frameworks for tackling NCD drivers and determinants, presented the lessons learned from the FCTC, and co-organised a session on sustainable investment for NCDs. FCA and CRUK also organised an informal side event on sustainable funding for NCDs and the importance of effectively communicating the need to invest in tobacco control and NCDs more broadly.

FCA actively contributed to the work of the WHO Civil Society Working Group on NCDs (CSWG) as a member. The focus of the working group drastically shifted in 2020 when the global pandemic hit and the relationship between COVID-19 and NCDs became apparent.

FCA continued to support the advocacy and communications work of the CSWG and coordinated the development of a statement on COVID-19 and NCDs for the virtual High-Level Political Forum in July 2020. The statement notably called on governments to raise tobacco taxes and implement taxes on other unhealthy commodities such as alcohol and ultra-processed foods.

Voluntary National Reviews for the Sustainable Development Goals

The Sustainable Development Agenda is a collective plan of action to achieve 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 Targets. This includes Target 3.a, “strengthen the implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in all countries, as appropriate.” Part of the follow-up and review of the SDGs includes Voluntary National Reviews (VNRs), which are reports written by countries to review their progress towards achieving the SDGs. VNRs create the foundation for regular SDG review by the High-level Political Forum meeting under the auspices of United Nations Economic and Social Council.

In 2020, FCA completed its work on the Guide for Parties on how to include Target 3.a in their SDG Voluntary National Reviews, a report contracted by the FCTC Convention Secretariat. The guide will help tobacco control stakeholders in evaluating and promoting their progress on SDG Target 3.a. The Secretariat published a preliminary draft of the guide and held a soft launch with a virtual side event at the High-Level Political Forum in July. FCA had the opportunity to participate in the event, sharing civil society’s views on the integration of the FCTC into the SDG agenda. This guide will be useful for Parties completing VNRs and FCA members alike. Members can use it to help with their engagement in the VNR process and advocate for better inclusion of Target 3.a.
THE PROTOCOL TO ELIMINATE ILlicit TRADE IN TOBACCO PRODUCTS:

A CRUCIAL TIME IN THE LEAD UP TO MOP2

The second Meeting of the Parties (MOP2) to the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products (the Protocol) was scheduled for November 2020 in The Hague, Netherlands. Due to COVID-19, the meeting was postponed to November 2021 and FCA focused on making the best of the additional time before MOP2.

Since the Protocol is only two years old, inter-sessional work is crucial to establish structure so it can be an effective tool for Parties in eliminating all forms of illicit trade in tobacco products. Important deadlines in the Protocol are already approaching, which made 2020 a critical year to make progress. Throughout 2020, FCA participated in two Working Groups that were created by the First Meeting of the Parties (MOP1) in 2018.

The first Working Group focused on matters related to tracking and tracing systems, members, and the second group on international cooperation and assistance, including issues related to Free Zones. Coordinating with the FCA membership during this process was crucial to ensure that the concerns of civil society from all regions are heard.

Deadlines set in the Protocol are already looming for the original Parties, such as establishing identification markings for tracking and tracing. The tracking and tracing working group for example had the important mission of setting the global tracking and tracing regime that should be established by 2023. In 2019, FCA unveiled a guidebook to provide a broad overview of the Protocol and explain track and trace technologies or methods, which Parties are asked to implement by 2023.

This year, FCA worked to translate the guidebook into French to assist more Parties with this step-by-step breakdown. This serves as a valuable tool for decision-makers to gain a good understanding of tracking and tracing, which is a core provision of the Protocol.

COVID-19 did not prevent the industry from interfering. In fact, the tobacco industry increased its attempts to interfere in policies to fight illicit trade. In 2020, FCA continued to raise awareness about the industry’s interference, their participation in international events on the subject, and their flawed track and trace solutions proposed to governments globally.

It is imperative that FCA and its membership continue to engage with Parties to the Protocol to ensure that it becomes a useful international tool.
Like everyone, with the COVID-19 pandemic and the international travel restrictions, we had to shift many of our planned activities to a virtual setting. In honour of the postponed COP9, FCA launched a week-long social media campaign the week of 9th November 2020.

The campaign focused on promoting the different perspectives and priorities from the tobacco control community. This included the need to augment efforts on global WHO FCTC implementation, the Global Strategy, and international cooperation to position tobacco control as a priority in health systems in the post-COVID-19 global recovery.

We asked our members to share their COP9 priorities on Twitter and received an outpouring number of photos and messages from over 30 organisations. They shared messages highlighting the importance of WHO FCTC implementation, the global strategy, tobacco taxation, Article 5.3, and more.

Parties and civil society organisations from AMRO and AFRO shared their national priorities for tobacco control via video messages. Throughout the week we heard from Joao Ricardo Rodrigues Viegas, MOP Regional Coordinator, AMRO and Analyst, Brazilian National Cancer Institute (INCA/IMS), Fernando Jacome, MOP President and Director of Cooperation of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Public Health, Ecuador, Reina Roa, MD, COP Bureau Representative, AMRO and National Director of Planning and Focal Point for Tobacco Control, Ministry of Health, and Oumar BA, MD, MOP Bureau Representative, AFRO and Coordinator of the National Programme for the Fight against Tobacco of the Ministry of Health in Senegal.
We also had the opportunity to hear from various experts in the tobacco control community on key issue areas in 3 think pieces. Ryan Forrest, FCA’s Associate Director for Policy and Advocacy, wrote about the effect of COVID-19 on tobacco control and how to build back better to ensure tobacco control is instrumental in covid recovery. Adriana Blanco, Head of the FCTC Secretariat, highlighted the potential differences for COP9, including a shift in focus and how CSOs can support these efforts and Paul Blokhuis, State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sport, shared the Dutch vision for FCTC implementation globally and the significance of developing a smoke-free generation.

FCA concluded the week with a joint webinar co-hosted by FCA/ASH US on financing for tobacco control, which was moderated by Leslie Rae Ferat, FCA’s Executive Director. The speakers included Ryan Forrest (FCA), Robinah Kaitiritimba (UNHCO), Rob Tripp (FCTC Secretariat), Raphaëlle Faure (International Development Freelance Consultant), and Sarah Rose Taylor (FCA). The webinar examined the dimensions of the global funding gap and provided an overview of findings from our research on optimal financing instruments to address the problem. It also featured UNHCO’s leading budget advocacy work in Uganda in cooperation with FCA. Following the webinar, FCA staff authored an editorial that was published in Tobacco Induced Diseases that sheds additional light on the problem. It also gives potential solutions for domestic resource mobilisation and a pooled funding mechanism akin to the trust funds established under other treaty bodies.
Overall, FCA received over 100 photos and messages on COP priorities from members all over the world, disseminated 5 videos from Parties and CSOs, published 3 articles, and had over 113 attendees for the joint webinar with ASH US on financing tobacco control.

All of this could have not been possible without the overwhelming support from the international tobacco control community.

SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGN
#COP9WEEK

1,300
TWITTER ENGAGEMENTS

50.3%
ENGAGEMENT RATE

70
RETWEETS

220
LIKES
The theme for World No Tobacco Day 2020 highlighted industry tactics to attract younger generations. It focused on protecting youth from industry manipulation and preventing them from tobacco and nicotine use. FCA took the opportunity to highlight the role of strong tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship (TAPS) regulation to protect youth. In countries around the world, young people are at risk of being introduced to cigarettes and novel tobacco products through aggressive TAPS campaigns, especially through social media and other cross-border internet-based entertainment media.

FCA's World No Tobacco Day campaign for 2020 included a digital advocacy toolkit and two webinars. The first webinar was on the topic of strong cross-border TAPS regulation: shielding youth from aggressive marketing and promotion of harmful tobacco products. Speakers included Yannick Romero (Union for International Cancer Control), Becky Freeman (University of Sydney), and Pinpin Zheng (Fudan University), with the FCA team acting as hosts and moderators. This well-attended webinar touched on how internet-based cross-border TAPS targets healthy young people and regulation is key in helping prevent tobacco use initiation among youths.

The second webinar focused on why the African region needs to worry about cross-border advertising and how to get involved. Speakers included Daouda Adam (Consumer Association in Chad), Stella Bialous (University of California San Francisco), Leonce Sessou (African Tobacco Control Alliance), and Emmanuelle Beguinot (Comité National Contre le Tabagisme).

They discussed various topics ranging from FCTC the importance of a total ban on corporate social responsibility (CSR), to tobacco industry manipulation via TAPS to the lessons learned from cross-border advertising in France. One of the key messages coming out of the webinar was how the AFRO region must consider the tobacco industry’s increasing use of new media in attracting youth and push against these tactics using national laws and regulations for implementing FCTC Article 13.
Members in Action: Euro

COVID-19 created massive challenges and hardships for the entire world, including Europe. Despite the strict lockdowns and restrictions, our members in the region were able to make significant progress on key policy and advocacy work.

In 2020, several European countries raised tobacco taxes following sustained campaigns from civil society organisations.

Poland started 2020 with a 10% increase in the excise tax for alcohol and tobacco products. Smokers in Poland will spend around 1 Złt more for a standard cigarette pack. The average price of a pack of cigarettes also increased in the Czech Republic by 5 KC. Romania increased its excise duty per 1,000 cigarettes to 386 RON (€ 80), as compared to the previous 366 RON (€ 76). Denmark increased tobacco excise duties in a two-step move, resulting in an average price increase for a pack of twenty cigarettes from 41 to 55 DKK on 1st April 2020, and to 60 DKK on 1st January 2021. As of 1st April 2020, The Netherlands increased taxes on cigarettes by 1€ per pack and roll-your-own by 2.50€ per 50 grams. These changes are part of the country’s National Prevention Agreement of 2018. Belgium adopted an increase in tobacco excise duties starting in 2021. A pack of 20 cigarettes will cost 7.50€ compared to the current 6.80€, with additional increases planned in 2022, 2023 and 2024. The measures will also take into account tobacco product prices in neighboring countries. France increased the price of its most frequently purchased brand of cigarettes to 10 € per pack. Sweden also announced a planned increase of tobacco taxes in 2023, the first one since 2015.

Large tax and price differences remain between countries and different product categories, which is a challenge to the public health objective of using tobacco taxation to drive down tobacco use.

In the UK, the #QuitForCovid campaign launched by FCA Member ASH (UK) in March 2020 was motivated by evidence that smoking increases the risk of severe COVID-19 illness. It was expanded later in the year with strong support and guidance from Breathe 2025, Fresh, the Greater Manchester Health, Social Care Partnership and PHE Marketing.

Its objective was to motivate smokers to quit and stay non-smoking, especially amongst the most disadvantaged smokers. ASH (UK) worked with academics and clinicians to ensure messaging was kept up-to-date, accurate, and resonated with smokers. The messages included information on the benefits of quitting smoking, evidence-based quitting methods, and resources and support from the National Health Service.

The campaign included radio and online ads, and toolkits were provided to partners across England. Measurements of the campaign indicate that overall, the campaign supported quitting smoking efforts. In 2020, it was estimated that a million smokers quit. Quit rates were much higher than in 2019, with 8.3% of those who had smoked in the last 12 months having quit, double the 4.3% rate in 2019. Sustaining the motivation to quit generated in 2020 and reducing the relapse rates of smokers, particularly in the younger age groups, remains a concern for the NGOs and the public health authorities.

Thanks for joining us to #QuitforCovid

Today is the day

You’ve got this!
Members in Action: AFRO

The Nigerian Tobacco Control Alliance

There is no doubt that 2020 posed a serious threat to Nigeria as a nation, challenging social cohesion and development initiatives. The medical preparedness and care facilities were tested by COVID-19. Most government offices were shut down and many crucial officials were redeployed to the field for COVID-19 assignment, which impacted advocacy and engagement efforts. Policy implementation slowed and the tobacco industry took advantage of the situation to interfere. Despite the challenges brought on by the pandemic, The Nigerian Tobacco Control Alliance (NTCA) still worked hard to achieve their goals.

NTCA and other civil society groups blocked the tobacco industry donation to the government under the COVID-19 private sector donation. As a result, the industry made a small donation to the sub-national government. NTCA alerted stakeholders to a tobacco industry move to introduce standards for non-combustible tobacco products through the Ministry of Trade and Industry.

The Alliance also continued to conduct advocacy and media briefings, targeting critical stakeholders working on the SDGs to prioritise tobacco control in Nigeria. NTCA held a tobacco control training for more than 40 organisations working on the SDGs and a survey was conducted to determine Nigeria's progress toward achieving the goals. The results were shared publicly to illustrate the gaps that needed to be filled by the government.

NTCA assisted in hosting the national tobacco control committee meeting and has been at the forefront of advocacy to set up the tobacco control fund, which is in its final stages.

Due to the economic recession, the government had to lower financial commitments to almost all sectors which impacted health and other crucial sectors, which in turn affected tobacco control. Nigeria suffered heavy economic costs, which took a toll on the organisation’s annual budget forcing the alliance to request assistance from the board to meet obligations for some organisational needs and cut down on consultants, volunteers, and limited its activities.

The Alliance anticipates sustained support and interventions from the relevant government ministries to achieve tobacco tax earmarking and to ensure excise duties and VAT for tobacco products are channelled into the tobacco control fund. There is an urgent need for advocacy and capacity building for tobacco control advocates at the local level. This will enable the organisation to monitor compliance of the National Tobacco Control Act 2015, particularly for TAPS, adherence to Graphic Health Warnings, and SDG implementation for Goal 3.
FIC BOLIVIA

FIC BOLIVIA, an InterAmerican Heart Foundation (IAHF) affiliate, promotes policies and social change to guarantee the right to health for Bolivians by reducing NCDs and their risk factors.

Several years ago, FCA noted the high tobacco consumption and minimal progress in tobacco control policies in Bolivia compared to the rest of the Parties to the FCTC in the region. Given that situation, FCA decided to support and encourage a small group of people in Bolivia, which eventually became FIC Bolivia. This group influenced the Ministry of Health to promote tobacco control policies. After this initial step, Campaign for Tobacco Free Kids (CTFK), The Union, and PAHO began to support various activities.

CTFK’s financial and technical support started in 2016, which helped support a Tobacco Law Project. This led to a comprehensive tobacco control law, which was signed by the senate on February 13th, 2020. The new tobacco control law was a significant step forward because it included 100% smoke-free environments, graphic health warnings, bans on advertising, tobacco dependence treatment, and more. Luckily, FIC Bolivia’s huge policy victory passed right before the pandemic began and shut everything down in March 2020.

FIC Bolivia’s advocacy work was pivotal for their tobacco control success. They developed communications campaigns to raise awareness about the issue, contacted political decision-makers and national authorities directly, and provided scientific evidence to support these policies.

FIC Bolivia also promoted the creation of a Smoke-Free Alliance, which became an important tool for social mobilisation by gathering and encouraging civil society organisations and institutions.

FIC Bolivia’s activities and events were supported through technical support by PAHO and international leaders such as FCA, IAHF, The Union, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg University, and more. They were funded by CTFK. The WHO FCTC Secretariat endorsed the organisation and conducted needs assessments.

Since Bolivia and Paraguay went smoke-free in 2020, the entire region of South America is officially smoke-free!
Members in Action: ASEAN

FIHealth Justice Philippines

Health Justice Philippines, founded in 2009, aims to bridge the gap between public health and law. The NGO is committed to being the leading resource in research and capacity building for priority public health policies such as tobacco taxation, health promotion, graphic health warnings, and smoke-free environments.

In 2020, they carried out an impressive variety of advocacy and communications activities despite the ongoing challenges caused by the pandemic.

They conducted a focus group discussion on scaling up health promotion and learning from tobacco control programmes with the Department of Health and Education and local government units and held a training for the Department of the Interior and Local Government (DILG) on smoke-free advocacy.

Health Justice was a speaker during the FDA public consultation for e-cigarettes and heated tobacco product regulations. In collaboration with the DILG, they conducted a smoke-free advocacy training, which was attended by DILG regional offices.

Everyone around the world faced challenges and restrictions during the global pandemic. Yet, Health Justice made the most of the situation by utilising technology to maintain their dedication and commitment to capacity building through their tobacco control advocacy work.

For the launch of the Philippine Smoke-Free Movement (PSFM), they released a smoke-free song with the help of a smoke-free advocate, actress, and host Bea Binene.

Young Artists for Young Survivors exhibition, in collaboration with the local government, to provide a platform for young talent to express their experiences dealing with tobacco-related illness.

World No Tobacco Day webinar on tobacco control and the new normal.
Members in Action: WPRO

Samoa Cancer Society

To date, Samoa has not had any community transmission of COVID-19 and only had 2 cases in managed isolation after arriving from overseas. Out of caution, the Samoan Government implemented an emergency response in preparation for the worst. The number of people in public gatherings is limited and social distancing is enforced. There were a few periods of complete lockdown because of COVID-19 risk in the community.

The Samoa Cancer Society (SCS) has developed a COVID-19 response plan including remote support for patients and shifting awareness and education campaigns to social media platforms. SCS also had to implement a rigorous training regime for the cancer champion volunteers. In the case of a complete lockdown, the organisation wanted to make sure the volunteers knew how to access social media for communication to stay in touch.

SCS developed contactless delivery protocols for cancer care kits and supplies for the palliative care patients. Fortunately, they haven’t had to use these yet, and hopefully never will, as it is vital that they maintain personal contact with the patients.

Despite the pandemic, SCS conducted several activities. In partnership with the Ministry of Health, they initiated a poster making competition for WNTD for youth ages 12-21 to promote the theme ‘Protecting youth from industry manipulation and preventing them from tobacco and nicotine use.” They generated 30 entries through social media channels.

SCS also continued their #buttitout campaign. The goal of this campaign was to raise awareness and disseminate information about the negative impact of cigarette butt litter on our health and the environment. They completed 9 outreach visits in the community including secondary schools, workplaces, church gatherings, and women’s committees in rural villages. During these visits, they shared information about cigarette butt litter and highlighted tobacco and alcohol consumption as two of the leading causes of cancer in Samoa.

SCS has produced nine cigarette butt receptacles through this project and has already installed four in the town area. The engagement of local businesses and government during the installation process was symbolic of the community support for this initiative. The organisation also developed awareness ads to ensure maximum exposure of health and environment messages to the community leading into the Christmas and New Year holiday season.

Samoa was fortunate to have almost no cases of COVID-19 in the community. Because of the timely government restrictions put into place, they were able to keep their community safe and continue with their tobacco control activities.
FCA’s Future and Evolution

The FCTC is currently in the midst of its first medium-term strategic plan on implementation, the Global Strategy to Accelerate Tobacco Control (2019-2025), and the Secretariat and Parties to the Convention are accordingly, but slowly, shifting their focus to FCTC implementation. Global tobacco control is also trying to find its place in global health as it stands during the COVID-19 pandemic. Donors, governments, and global health actors have shifted their attention and their resources to COVID-19 response. These changes, paired with global economic downturn, have led to significant funding shortfalls for non-governmental organisations and other non-profits. Further, global tobacco control’s role in the post-pandemic world remains unclear.

It is in this context that FCA initiated some important governance and organisational work for the alliance. Like many organisations, FCA was hit hard by the pandemic, and the decrease in many international assistance budgets resulted in some serious changes. Throughout the year, we continued to operate in a rapidly evolving context amid the challenges brought on by the pandemic. Despite the uncertainties, FCA set out to determine the next steps for itself as an organisation and as an alliance which included two major activities: creating a new medium-term strategy and incorporating in Canada. In order to inform the new medium-term strategy and upcoming incorporation in Canada, we began a two-phase membership consultation to identify the pillars of new strategic priorities, governance structure, and policy process.

The first phase, undertaken near the end of the year, involved surveys, interviews, and focus groups with 50 key stakeholders. We found that they hold a positive impression of FCA and many of its achievements since inception. Key FCA priorities that they identified for the next five years include: promoting the Global Strategy, supporting national-level implementation through capacity building, and creating more connections between tobacco control and development. The second phase of the consultation will run in early 2021 to capture our members’ opinions on proposed strategic priorities and organisational changes for the near future.

Given the critical changes happening with the organisation, the General Assembly approved the important decision to suspend Board elections and continue to operate under the current Board and the invaluable leadership of Kylie Lindorff as Chair.

We continued to welcome new members to our ever-growing membership database, including new members outside of the tobacco control community. As we work to expand our reach to the development and global health community, we are thrilled to see so many new members eager to join FCA and the fight against tobacco.
BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Compaoré
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Ongerung Kambes Kesolei
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Regional Coordinator
Pacific Island Countries (PIC)

Domilyn C Villarreiz
Regional Coordinator
Western Pacific (WPRO) and ASEAN
2020 Finances

FCA’s accounts are audited annually by the independent Swiss accounting firm, BDO Ltd, which expressed an unqualified or “clean” opinion of FCA’s 2019 financial statements. The audited financial statements for 2020 will be available in mid-2021. BDO Ltd has declared itself free of all links to the tobacco industry. Copies of audited financial statements are available upon written request to the FCA Secretariat (fca@fctc.org).

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FCA gratefully acknowledges the in-kind and financial support of the following organisations: