



## Media Release

For Immediate Release

### **Mike Bloomberg to deliver keynote address at the Inaugural Leadership Summit on Tobacco Control in May 2021**

### **Stephen Donnelly, Minister of Health in Ireland to address the Summit Opening Plenary**

**Tuesday 22nd September, 2020 (Paris, France)—Mike Bloomberg**, founder of Bloomberg Philanthropies and Bloomberg LP, three-term Mayor of New York City, has been announced as a keynote speaker at the inaugural [Leadership Summit on Tobacco Control](#), to be held virtually from May 6-7 2021. Bloomberg will be joined at the event by heads of state and national and subnational governments, prominent global health leaders, the scientific community and civil society.

The Summit is being organised by the Secretariat of the 18<sup>th</sup> World Conference on Tobacco or Health (WCTOH) which was due to take place in Dublin, Ireland, in March 2021 but due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has now been postponed until 8-10 March 2022 in the same city. **Stephen Donnelly**, Minister of Health for Ireland, will also address the Summit.

Worldwide, tobacco use kills eight million people every year – including 65,000 children who die from illnesses caused by second-hand smoke. Friday 25 September is World Lung Day.

The Summit will focus conversations on the changing landscape of tobacco, the emergence of new nicotine and tobacco products like e-cigarettes, and the tobacco industry's attempt to re-brand itself as part of the solution to the tobacco epidemic – whilst continuing to aggressively market its traditional products in lower- and middle-income countries, where 80 percent of tobacco-caused deaths occur. The programme will also focus on the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on tobacco control, human rights and health financing.

“We are obviously disappointed that the WCTOH is not coming to Ireland next year as planned,” said Stephen Donnelly, the Minister of Health for Ireland. “We can wait until 2022 to meet together in Dublin but the conversation on finding solutions to the tobacco epidemic cannot wait. The COVID-19 pandemic brings new urgency to combatting the tobacco epidemic. The Irish government is very proud to be leading on this important event.”

“With so many lives at stake, this first-ever Summit comes at a critical time for global leaders in tobacco control,” said Michael R. Bloomberg, founder of Bloomberg Philanthropies and Bloomberg LP and three-term mayor of New York City. “We face a number of urgent, overlapping challenges – as COVID-19 poses a deadly threat to respiratory health, as tobacco companies try to exploit the pandemic to burnish their images, and as low- and middle-income countries confront the growing burden of tobacco-related diseases. But, together, we can tackle these challenges – and continue to make life-saving progress with our partners in the fight against tobacco, worldwide.”

The Leadership Summit on Tobacco Control has confirmed four plenary themes for the event that reflect the rapidly changing tobacco control environment:

- Plenary 1: Navigating Change – Leading with Impact
- Plenary 2: Making the tobacco endgame real: Challenges and opportunities in a changing environment
- Plenary 3: Evolving nicotine and tobacco products: Challenges and way forward
- Plenary 4: Reforming National Tobacco Tax Policy: Perspectives from Health and Finance Leaders.

Mike Bloomberg has been a long-time champion of tobacco control since 2007, having committed nearly US\$ 1 billion to combat tobacco use across the globe. At the last WCTOH in 2018, Bloomberg launched Stopping Tobacco Organizations and Products (STOP), a global tobacco industry watchdog that is monitoring nefarious tobacco industry tactics and practices. In 2019, Bloomberg Philanthropies launched a new initiative focused on banning flavoured e-cigarettes in the United States in response to the growing number of young people using e-cigarettes, particularly middle and high schoolers. Bloomberg Philanthropies' tobacco control initiative focuses on advancing interventions that are proven to help curb tobacco use and save lives. Since it began, 65 countries have passed comprehensive tobacco control laws, protecting more than 3.5 billion individuals against the harmful effects of tobacco, which will save 35 million lives.

Today there are new and evolving challenges. Increasingly scientific evidence is demonstrating that smokers are more likely to be infected by COVID-19, and more likely to experience a more severe or deadly form of the virus. People with pre-existing non-communicable diseases, for which tobacco use is a leading risk factor – are also more vulnerable.

“It is vital then that we leverage the Summit to remain focused on our goal to implement evidence-based policies set out in the World Health Organization’s Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, and end the tobacco epidemic,” said Professor **Harry Lando**, of the Division of Epidemiology and Community Health at the University of Minnesota, U.S. and Chair of the WCTOH Organising Committee.

The WCTOH Leadership Summit on Tobacco Control will announce its full programme in January 2021 and delegate registration will open the same month.

“We encourage tobacco control advocates from all backgrounds, working in all sectors, to join and participate in sessions, and we will endeavour to make this event as accessible and affordable as possible,” said **José Luis Castro**, Executive Director of the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease (The Union). The Union is the convenor of the WCTOH Secretariat.

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**Further Information:**

Email: [press@theunion.org](mailto:press@theunion.org)

**[About the World Conference on Tobacco or Health \(WCTOH\)](#)**

Held every three years, WCTOH is the world’s premiere international tobacco control conference with some 2000 delegates from 100 countries sharing best practices in tobacco control to turn research into action and policy change.

The conference format will include plenary speakers, symposia, posters, workshops and post-graduate courses on the many aspects of the tobacco epidemic and will highlight the efforts being made to control it through the WHO FCTC and MPOWER.

**Twitter:** @WCTOH2022

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/WCTOH.org/>

**About the [International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease \(The Union\)](#)**

The Union was founded in 1920 and is the world's first global health organisation. We are a global leader in ending TB, we fight the tobacco industry, and we solve key problems in treating major diseases. We use science to design the best treatments and policies for the most pressing public health challenges affecting people living in poverty around the world. The Union's members, staff and consultants operate in more than 140 countries and embody our core values of accountability, independence, quality and solidarity.

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