

**Interagency Committee on Smoking and Health  
April 13, 2005**

**“Addressing the Global Tobacco Epidemic”**

**Overview of Global Tobacco Use and Prevention — Presentation Notes**

**Overview/Update on the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)**

**William R. Steiger, PhD, Director, Office of Global Health Affairs and Special Assistant to the Secretary for International Affairs, Department of Health and Human Services.**

Dr. Steiger provided an overview and update on the FCTC. The FCTC is the first global public health treaty negotiated by the WHO. After three years of negotiations on the FCTC, the World Health Assembly adopted the treaty on May 21, 2003 and it went into effect on February 27, 2005. Unlike most negotiations of this sort, which are led by the State Department, the FCTC US Delegation was led by the Department of Health and Human Services. Dr. Steiger recognized the members of the U.S. Delegation who were present at the meeting and especially recognized the involvement of Joy Epstein who “kept the train running.”

Dr. Steiger continued by providing an update on recent developments following the adoption of the FCTC. The United States was the 108<sup>th</sup> nation to sign the treaty on May 10, 2004, but has yet to ratify it. As of March 24, 2005, 61 countries have taken this step. The broad objective of the FCTC is to protect “present and future generations from devastating health, social, environmental and economic consequences” of tobacco use and to reduce the prevalence of tobacco use and exposure to tobacco smoke. Some of the measures to reduce demand for and supply of tobacco include: comprehensive tobacco advertising bans, price and tax increases, health warning labels on tobacco products, and measures to protect people from secondhand smoke.

Although the United States has not yet ratified the treaty, Dr. Steiger told the committee that a preliminary review indicates that all but one of the FCTC’s obligations are already being implemented under existing U.S. law — the exception being a warning label size requirement.

Dr. Steiger concluded his remarks by citing several examples of HHS's commitment to global tobacco control, as evidenced by collaborations with the WHO to support the Global Youth Tobacco Survey, and working with NIH's Fogarty International Center to build capacity in developing nations. Dr. Steiger urged committee members to "stay tuned" regarding U.S. ratification of the FCTC, and that tobacco use prevention and control will continue to be a priority under Secretary Leavitt's leadership of HHS.

Following Dr. Steiger's presentation, Committee members were given an opportunity to ask questions of the previous speakers.