



**KEY NOTE SPEECH BY H.E. MUTHOMI NJUKI, EGH, GOVERNOR THARAKA NITHI
COUNTY AND CHAIR OF THE HEALTH COMMITTEE, COUNCIL OF GOVERNORS**

DURING THE ANNUAL TOBACCO TAXATION CONFERENCE

HELD AT THE AGHAKHAN UNIVERSITY, NAIROBI

3RD OCTOBER 2023 AT 9AM

Ministry of Health Representatives

County Government officials

National Treasury and KRA Representatives

CEO, International Institute for Legislative Affairs

Mr. Albert Taiti, Chair of Kenya Clinical Officers Association

Mr. Gamaliel Omondi, Head of Tobacco Control Board

KIPPRA Representatives

Development partners present

Ladies and Gentlemen

Good Morning,

Allow me to take this early opportunity to thank you all for being part of this critical conference that will move this nation to not only improve our health indicators but also enable progress towards attainment of UHC. This conference serves a very important role of bringing together stakeholders to deliberate on tobacco use, particularly how to tap on the revenue generated from taxation of tobacco and tobacco products for health financing. Tobacco use takes a heavy toll on public health, causing an array of diseases and placing an enormous burden on healthcare systems worldwide especially in financing health care.

Globally, Tobacco kills 6 million people annually, It also contributes to **80% of premature deaths** and is one of the main risk factors for non-communicable diseases in developing countries. In Kenya, **2.7 million adults use tobacco products,** the prevalence of tobacco use in Kenya stands at 9%. The effect of using tobacco and tobacco products goes beyond the individual. It can cause cancer, heart disease, stroke, lung diseases, diabetes, increases risk for tuberculosis, and problems of the immune system.

Second hand smoke exposure contributes to approximately **41,000 deaths among non-smoking adults and 400 deaths in infants each year world wide.** Smoking during pregnancy can cause tissue damage in the unborn baby, particularly in the lung and brain, and some studies suggests a link between maternal smoking and cleft lip. The wide use of tobacco products in Kenya **has generated up USD815.80m in 2023** and this expected to grow **annually by 1.95%.**

Ladies and Gentlemen

In this context, Tobacco taxation serves as a powerful tool not only for curbing tobacco consumption but also for generating much-needed revenue to finance healthcare system and combat health issues caused by the use. The funding can therefore be channelled into improving among others, healthcare infrastructure, expanding access to health services, and supporting public health campaigns that promote healthier lifestyles.

However, the success of tobacco taxation as a healthcare financing strategy hinges on the following factors; it requires careful consideration of tax rates to strike the right balance between revenue generation and discouraging consumption. **Additionally**, efforts should be made to combat illicit tobacco trade, which can undermine both public health objectives and revenue collection.

Ladies and Gentlemen

The intersection of social justice and tobacco taxation reform underscores the potential for taxation policies to simultaneously address public health and equity concerns. To navigate this effectively, as a country we need to be stable and consistent in our practices and taxation reforms to sustain the gains made in tobacco taxation. some of the best practices that should be strengthened include;

1. Allocating tax revenue to fund accessible tobacco control and cessation programs in communities,
2. Maintaining transparency and accountability in revenue allocation,
3. Combating illicit tobacco trade, and adopting a comprehensive approach to tobacco control that includes public awareness campaigns and smoke-free policies.
4. Promoting health equity, and generating crucial funding for public health initiatives.

As I conclude,

By understanding and implementing effective and well-balanced taxation policies, we can reduce the devastating health consequences of tobacco while simultaneously ensuring that our healthcare systems have the resources, they need to provide quality care for all.

It's time for the government to take bold steps to ensure that the those affected benefit from the profits generated in tobacco use.

The council of Governors remains committed to supporting initiatives to curb tobacco use and its effect to the health of a population. We therefore hope that this meeting will come up with best practices that can be adopted across the Counties.

Thank You all.