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## Ukraine's decision to withdraw its complaint at WTO: an evidence-based move

9 June 2015: Ukrainian authorities announced their intention last week to withdraw a complaint at the World Trade Organization (WTO) against Australia concerning that country's implementation of tobacco plain packaging.

"We are pleased to note Ukraine's decision because it is evidence-based and befits Ukraine's status as a Party to the WHO FCTC," says Dr Vera Luiza da Costa e Silva, Head of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) Secretariat.

Guidelines for implementation of Articles 11 and 13 of the WHO FCTC recommend adoption of plain packaging as a part of comprehensive multisectoral measures to reduce demand for tobacco products.

Guidelines to Article 11 state Parties to the WHO FCTC should consider "adopting measures to restrict or prohibit the use of logos, colours, brand images or promotional information on packaging other than brand names and product names displayed in a standard colour and font style (plain packaging). This may increase the noticeability and effectiveness of health warnings and messages, prevent the package from detracting attention from them, and address industry package design techniques that may suggest that some products are less harmful than others."

Guidelines for implementation of Article 13 also state that "packaging and product design are important elements of advertising and promotion. Parties should consider adopting plain packaging requirements to eliminate the effects of advertising or promotion on packaging. Packaging, individual cigarettes or other tobacco products should carry no advertising or promotion, including design features that make products attractive."

Ukraine's decision to withdraw its complaint also reflects the country's ongoing commitment to tobacco control and public health. In recent years, Ukraine has made significant progress in protecting its population from the harms caused by tobacco use. This progress includes requiring large graphic health warnings on packaging, imposing a comprehensive ban on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship, increasing taxes on tobacco products and creating smoke free environments.

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