Dear colleagues,

World No Tobacco Day serves as an annual reminder for the public health community that tobacco control is integral to the urgent goals of promoting lung health and reducing the enormous global impact of non-communicable disease.

Observed each year on this day under auspices of the World Health Organization, World No Tobacco Day shines a bright spotlight for the general public on the vast human and economic damage wrought by tobacco. Among public health professionals, it is more: it is a challenge and a call to action.

Today we are challenged to do more, and do better, even as we pause to note the significant progress already made. We are challenged not only by our awareness that millions of lives can be saved, but also by the new provocations and interference constantly generated by the tobacco industry.

The Union acts on the belief that controlling tobacco is essential to improving lung health. Extending our tradition of knowing, sharing and acting, we have become increasingly active over the past decade in advancing tobacco control as a key element in addressing lung disease. Our Department of Tobacco Control has been forceful, innovative and persistent toward this end. Through their efforts, supported by affiliate Union offices, we have provided technical and management assistance to help many countries and NGOs implement WHO’s six-point MPOWER strategy to reduce tobacco-related deaths.

In that decade, we have:

- Supported **29 countries** in enacting or strengthening smokefree legislation, protecting **3.2** billion people from second-hand smoke.
- Supported **16 countries** in introducing or enhancing graphic health warnings on tobacco product packaging, reaching **2.6 billion** people.
- Supported **18 countries** as they passed or strengthened laws to ban tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorships, covering **2.3** billion people.
- Achieved similar impact in policies to raise tobacco taxes, combat industry interference and enable sustainable tobacco control activities.

These are meaningful achievements, but let us remember that the tobacco leaf and the industry behind it are potent foes. Our challenges are great: the introduction of powerfully marketed new products like e-cigarettes, the shameful manner in which the tobacco industry fights back against responsible public health policy and the constant struggle for adequate resources all make clear that difficult work remains ahead.

The Union is greatly encouraged that all of us in public health will rise to these challenges. We are focused, we are determined and we have achieved great progress in the past decade. And, perhaps most important, we are fighting on the side of saving lives. We have turned the trend line in the right direction, and there is no doubt that we will win.

José

José Luis Castro  
Executive Director, The Union