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Regulators have a responsibility to smokers to help realize the potential of innovative, reduced risk tobacco and nicotine products

Novel Products offer a major opportunity to reduce death and disease caused by tobacco

02 October 2014; West Virginia, USA: With less than 2 weeks to go before the World Health Organization (WHO) starts its deliberations on tobacco, experts argue that in the rush to action, regulators could be destroying the astonishing potential that reduced-risk products have to reduce the public health impact of smoking.

Speakers said today at the Global Tobacco Networking Forum (GTNF) in West Virginia, that smokeless tobacco products, e-cigarettes and other novel products could help reduce the one billion premature deaths from tobacco use in the 21st century predicted by the WHO.

'The public health problem of cigarette smoking requires innovative approaches, and among the most promising approaches are products for providing smokers with nicotine without exposing them to combustion products in smoke,' said Professor Jed Rose, Director of the Center for Smoking Cessation at Duke University. Rose is co-inventor of the nicotine patch.

'Innovations like these could be among the most significant health innovations of the 21st century,' said Jeff Stier, Senior Fellow at the National Center for Public Policy Research in Washington, DC. 'Because they are significantly lower in risk than cigarettes and they appeal to smokers who have failed to quit, these products could save hundreds of millions of lives.' But, Stier added, 'in order for these products to achieve their potential, regulators must approach them with a light touch.'

Stier argues that 'the WHO's position that e-cigarettes should be regulated in the same way as tobacco is not only unsupported by science, but ironically, it would undermine the agency's own mission to reduce the harm and disease caused by tobacco.'

In the US, the Food and Drug Administration's takes a more scientific approach and has issued guidance suggesting the scientific evidence needed to show that a tobacco product is reduced risk and likely to benefit public health – a Modified Risk Tobacco Product (MRTP).

Smokeless tobacco maker Swedish Match has applied for a modified risk order for its snus products.

Jim Solyst, director of federal government affairs for Swedish Match North America, said 'the modified risk provisions and standards of the Act are rigorous, but they are at least science-based, and allow for an open and transparent examination of the evidence. 'The hope is that a modified risk order will encourage people to move from smoking to the alternative products.'

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Notes to Editors

About the Global Tobacco Networking Forum: The Global Tobacco Networking Forum (GTNF) is the world's premier venue for interaction among tobacco and e-cigarette industry representatives and engagement with stakeholders. It brings together industry members, media, commentators, and representatives of NGOs and the finance sector for two days of presentation, discussion and networking. The GTNF debuted in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in 2008 and has subsequently been held in Bangalore, India (2010), Antwerp, Belgium (2012) and Cape Town, South Africa (2013). This year it will take place in West Virginia, USA. The GTNF is organised and hosted by Tobacco Reporter magazine and funded by sponsorship from numerous companies in the sector. For more information, visit: www.gtnf-2014.com