



CABINET MINUTE NO. 1045 OF APRIL 21, 2005

Policy for the Establishment of a Smoke-free Environment in all Buildings and Vehicles owned, leased or occupied by any Ministry, Department or State Agency

Note H(2005)22 was considered.

Cabinet:

- (a) approved the policy document attached to the Note for the establishment of a smoke-free environment in all buildings and vehicles owned by any Ministry, Department or State Agency;
- (b) noted that implementation of the policy would be supported by tailored education interventions whereby all employees are exposed to information on the health risks associated with smoking; smoking cessation programmes and other support services would be conducted for the benefit of staff.

A. Leung Hoo - Gabriel
Secretary to Cabinet

H(2005)22
He: 10/6/123 Vol. III
April 13, 2005

Cabinet No.....

NOTE FOR CABINET

Tobacco Control

The matter for the consideration of Cabinet is the attached policy which mandates inter alia that all buildings and vehicles owned, leased or occupied by any Ministry, Department or State Agency be maintained smoke free.

2. Cabinet would recall that by Minute No. 1489 dated June 12, 2003 it agreed to the adoption of the World Health Organization (WHO) Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. Subsequently by Minute No. 1110 dated 29th April, 2004 it agreed to the ratification of the said Agreement. The Convention has entered into force as over forty (40) Member States have ratified the Convention and ninety (90) days have now elapsed after the 40th instrument of ratification was received.

3. The objective of this Convention and its protocols is to protect present and future generations from the devastating health, social, environmental and economic consequences of tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke by providing a framework for tobacco control. It is also to provide measures which are to be implemented by the Parties at the national, regional and international levels in order to reduce continually and substantially the prevalence of tobacco use and exposure to tobacco smoke.

4. To achieve the objectives of the Convention Parties are expected to be guided by the under mentioned principles:

- every person must be informed of the health consequences, addictive nature and mental threat posed by tobacco consumption and exposure to tobacco smoke; and
- effective legislation, executive and administrative measures must be taken at the appropriate governmental level to protect all persons from exposure to tobacco smoke.

5. It is recognized that strong political commitment is necessary to develop and support, at the national, regional and international levels comprehensive measures and coordinated responses taking into consideration the need to take measures to :

- protect all persons from exposure to tobacco smoke;
- prevent the initiation, promote and support cessation and to decrease the consumption of tobacco products in any form;
- promote the participation of individuals and communities in the development, implementation and evaluation of tobacco programs that are socially and culturally appropriate to their needs and perspectives; and
- address gender specific risks when developing tobacco control strategies.

6. The Ministry of Health has since 1997 adopted a policy that mandated a smoke free work environment. As such all buildings, hospitals and vehicles owned or occupied by the Ministry of Health and the Regional Health Authorities were declared smoke free. Accordingly smoking is prohibited in any building or vehicle owned or occupied by the public health sector. Visible No Smoking signs are placed in strategic areas as reminders of the policy. Further to support the implementation of this policy employees were exposed to education/information on the health risk associated with smoking. Evidence suggests a total support of this initiative.

7. The Ministry of Health is in receipt of a draft Tobacco Bill prepared by the Ministry of the Attorney General. Notwithstanding that, the Ministry is of the view that the immediate adoption and enforcement of this policy is an important pre-legislative step, as evidence suggest that Tobacco Control Legislation often encounters stiff opposition in most countries where the truth about tobacco and health is not well understood by people who mistakenly perceive tobacco use as a matter of "freedom" and "choice".

8. Accordingly it is recommended by the World Heath Organization that before embarking on a legislative program, countries should engage in an aggressive communication program to raise public understanding of tobacco and health issues and thereby create a climate in which legislation can succeed. This includes increasing public understanding of the impact of tobacco use on the health of smokers and nonsmokers exposed to secondary smoke. It also involves educating the public about the effectiveness of proven strategies for reducing tobacco use and the role of tobacco companies in perpetuating the tobacco epidemic. The Ministry of Health is currently developing such a communication program.

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9. Accordingly the Minister of Health recommends and Cabinet is asked to approve the no smoking policy which is appended.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

NO SMOKING POLICY: PUBLIC PROPERTY

A. Goals and Objectives

The establishment of a "smoke-free work environment" policy contributes to the development of a health promotion culture. The aim is to eliminate smoking in all buildings and vehicles owned leased or occupied by the public health sector and to influence smokers to reduce the number of tobacco products they use or to quit all together. It is intended to develop among persons a greater awareness of smoking as a risk factor for the leading causes of morbidity and mortality in our population, a desire to adopt a healthy lifestyle and eventually to engage in behaviour modification where the habit of smoking will either cease or never be initiated. Hopefully, there will be voluntary participation obviating the need to enforce the policy through disciplinary measures.

B. Components of the Regulation of Smoking in Public Property

1. Regulation of Smoking in the Work Environment

"Smoke-free work environment" shall be applicable to all levels of the building interior including private offices, cubicles, restrooms, cafeterias, elevators, classrooms, hallways, auditoriums, waiting rooms and gymnasiums.

The size and type of facilities/buildings shall influence the external boundaries of the no-smoking area.

The "Smoke-free work environment" policy shall also be applied to vehicles.

Visible "No-Smoking Signs" in strategic areas shall serve as reminders of the policy.

2. Regulation of Smoking among Employees in the Public Sector

Compliance with the "Smoke-free work environment" policy shall be supported by tailored education interventions whereby all employees are exposed to information on the health risks associated with smoking. Smoking cessation programmes and other support services shall be conducted for the benefit of staff.

3. Advertising and Sponsoring of Events

The public sector shall not solicit funds from, or encourage tobacco companies to advertise or sponsor any event.

4. Sale of Tobacco Products

Tobacco products shall not be offered for sale by concession booths, cafeterias or any other place where goods are sold on premises in the public sector.

5. Advertising of jobs

All advertisements for positions and contracts for services in the public sector must state that the sector subscribes to a "Smoke-free work environment". Smokers can be employed provided that they undertake to observe the "Smoke-free work environment" policy.

6. Responsibility for Implementation

The Permanent Secretary of the Ministries and Chief Executive Officers of the agencies of Government, shall be ultimately responsible and accountable for the establishment of a smoke-free work environment within their designated property and for seeking the necessary resources for the activities related to implementation of the policy.