



## New edition: SEATCA's Tobacco Control Atlas reveals progress, but challenges endure

**Bangkok, 30 August** – Singapore's impressive single digit adult smoking prevalence (9.2%) proves that ASEAN countries can effectively curb tobacco use, even with a ban on e-cigarettes and heated tobacco products. Taking a cue from Thailand, Singapore, and Myanmar, Lao PDR has become the fourth Asian country to mandate standardized tobacco packaging. These are just a few of the region's notable policy advancements highlighted in the newly launched Sixth Edition of the ASEAN Tobacco Control Atlas, published by the Southeast Asia Tobacco Control Alliance (SEATCA).



The sixth edition of the Atlas, as with the previous versions, was developed through the support and contribution of ASEAN member states.

Despite these achievements, the Atlas shows ASEAN still accounts for one-tenth of the world's smokers and half a million tobacco-related deaths annually, incurring billions in healthcare costs and economic losses for governments. Tobacco products also cause serious threats to the environment with a total of 4.5 trillion cigarette butts worldwide (including 462.6 billion from the ASEAN region) being discarded yearly. ASEAN countries spend nearly USD 10 billion annually on managing marine pollution and waste caused by cigarette butts and tobacco product packaging.

First published in 2013, the Atlas is the authoritative resource on tobacco control policies and practices in the region. Endorsed by the ASEAN Health Sector and developed with the support of all ASEAN member states, the Atlas is a highly-visual and data-driven encyclopedia that spells out the critical tobacco control challenges of our time.

Young people are becoming addicted to electronic smoking devices (ESDs) at an alarming rate, but only five ASEAN nations have banned these products (Brunei, Cambodia, Lao PDR,



Singapore, and Thailand). ESDs are restricted in Indonesia, Malaysia, and the Philippines, while Myanmar and Vietnam have yet to impose bans or restrictions.

Tobacco industry interference remains a significant issue in the ASEAN region. International tobacco control advocate Prof Judith Mackay said, "The Atlas clearly shows that the real enemy of smokers is not tobacco control advocates, but the tobacco industry itself luring them to use a deadly and addictive product."

Indonesia faces the strongest industry influence, while Brunei has the least. In many countries, the absence of measures protecting policy development allows the tobacco industry and its front groups, many of which are listed in the Atlas, to defeat, dilute, and delay effective tobacco control measures, such as tobacco taxation in Lao PDR and Vietnam or ESD regulation in Indonesia, Malaysia, and Philippines.

"This sixth edition of the ASEAN Tobacco Control Atlas is a historical witness to both the tobacco control progress in Southeast Asia and the continuing aggression of the tobacco industry to enslave our peoples in nicotine addiction," said Dr. Ulysses Dorotheo, SEATCA Executive Director.

"Governments need to strengthen their tobacco control policies to fully align with the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. More importantly, we call upon ASEAN nations to ban all new recreational nicotine products and phase out existing tobacco products to protect future generations from serious health harms and lifelong addiction. This will avoid repeating the mistake of allowing the cigarette epidemic that has caused so much harm in the last century," he added.

The ASEAN Tobacco Control Atlas is available [online](#).

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### **About SEATCA**

SEATCA is a multi-sectoral non-governmental alliance promoting health and saving lives by assisting ASEAN countries to accelerate and effectively implement the tobacco control measures contained in the WHO FCTC. Acknowledged by governments, academic institutions, and civil society for its advancement of tobacco control in Southeast Asia, the WHO bestowed on SEATCA the World No Tobacco Day Award in 2004 and the WHO Director-General's Special Recognition Award in 2014. SEATCA is an accredited ASEAN entity and an official Observer to the WHO FCTC Conference of Parties.