



PRESS CONFERENCE

LAUNCH OF THE YOUTH CALL FOR TOBACCO CONTROL

Think! Stop! And Act!

Date: 15 December 2023

Issued by: Dr. Blessings Kasenge (SADC Youth Parliamentarian – Zambia) and Mr. Washington Mumbamarwo (SADC Youth Forum Head of Media, Advocacy and Communications Cluster)- Zimbabwe. In attendance for solidarity- partners: Mr. Chilufya Luchembe (CEO AAZ), Mr. Ssims Banda (Young Professional Network), and Mr. Given Kapolyo (Centre for Trade Policy and Development)

Media Houses from the Republic of Zambia, the Southern Africa region, and beyond, young people, our partners; it's our pleasure to issue this statement on the Youth Call for Tobacco Control.

We have gathered here to share information with the media about the Youth Call for Tobacco Control, an initiative poised to respond to the worrying phenomenon of tobacco use by young people in our beloved region. Southern Africa Youth Forum (SAYoF) appreciates the positive economic impact of tobacco in Southern Africa, we also take cognizance of the negative impact of tobacco on the health of our people.

About SAYoF

The Southern Africa Youth Forum (SAYoF) is a regional development platform for youth in the southern Africa region working in 16 member countries and works with SADC Secretariat, SADC-PF, SADC-CNGO, African Union Youth Division, governments, SAT among other regional organizations to empower young people and ensure sustainable inclusion in developmental processes. SAYoF is the official convener of the SADC Youth Forum the largest youth gathering in Southern Africa convened before the SADC Heads of State and Government Summit to co-create solutions for youth and ensure regional and national development that is youth-centered. SAYoF is the convener of the SADC Youth Parliament a regional policy advocacy, engagement arm, and leadership mentorship flagship program for SAYoF which has Members of Parliament from across 16 Member countries. SAYoF sits in the Global Coalition for Youth, Peace, and Security, a UN-CSO partnership to advance youth for peace, SAYoF sits in the Dengue Advisory Group an international committee to fight Dengue as a Neglected Tropical Disease (NTDs), and was appointed by Africa Union (AU) to be part of the Africa Youth Front on Covid-19 a high-



level policy and advocacy framework by the Africa Union (AU) Youth Envoy for young people to co-lead Africa's response to Covid-19. SAYoF is the convener for the Southern Africa Rare Disease Coalition.

A call to Action!

The Call for Tobacco Control is a regional advocacy and engagement initiative that seeks to respond to the worrying and increased tobacco use by young people. The increased tobacco and drug abuse has become a major concern in Southern Africa. **SAYoF Health Cluster** among its partners namely; **Y-ACT and AMREF Health Africa**, informed by the urgent need for tobacco control in the region and realizing that tobacco use among young people is a growing concern and has more negative cost implications than benefits as evidenced by the research, SAYoF and our partners have taken upon ourselves to engage SADC member states, SADC-PF, private sector, CSOs, youth, students among other stakeholders. [The WHO Africa Regional Office reports](#) states that 13% of young adolescent girls in Africa use tobacco products, and most tobacco users begin before the age of 18. We therefore note the paramount importance of fast-track implementation of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The Youth Call for Tobacco Control initiative will use the Youth Development Model (YDM), a tool developed by SAYoF to respond to the problems that youth face on a day-to-day basis; it is a broad approach that seeks to promote various and diverse strategies to improve the daily life of youth through effective participation in national and regional processes. The Youth Call for Tobacco Control will be led by the SAYoF Health Cluster.

We are pleased to note that the engagement with policymakers has since commenced, last week the SAYoF Delegation was composed of the Regional Coordinator Mr. Misheck Gondo, the Head of Health Cluster Ms. Vivian Joseph, Dr. Hon Blessings Kasenge Member of Southern Africa Youth Parliament representing Zambia and Hon. Maria Undjondjo Southern Africa Youth Parliament representative for Namibia had the pleasure of presenting the initiative to Her Excellency Boemo Sekgoma and the SADC-PF team, and to seek areas of collaboration on the possibility of regional model legislation on tobacco control.

The Objectives of the Youth Call for Tobacco Control

- Accelerating youth access to information through research products on tobacco control.
- Enhancing youth, youth organizations, and public capacities through youth-led tobacco advocacy and training to lower tobacco use in Southern Africa.
- Increasing youth engagement with national and regional policymakers regarding tobacco control.



- Harvesting an effective reach through social media campaigns on tobacco control (Call for Action); and making effective use of community radios, online platforms, and community anti-tobacco hubs.
- Working with other stakeholders for the formulation of tobacco control policies.

We recognize the economic impact that tobacco farming has had on families and its contribution to national budgets across the region. However, it is essential to acknowledge the detrimental effects of excessive tobacco consumption, especially among young individuals. The health complications resulting from the excessive use of tobacco products can have long-lasting consequences, some of which may never be cured.

Today, we launch a powerful message to our youth: Think! Stop! And Act! Before you consume tobacco. We urge young people to take an active role in safeguarding their health and well-being. It is crucial to make informed choices and steer clear of tobacco products, which pose significant risks to their physical and mental health. By doing so, they not only protect themselves but also contribute to building healthier communities.

Furthermore, we must address the environmental impact of tobacco farming. The cultivation and curing of tobacco have dire effects on the land, as people often resort to cutting down trees. Deforestation, in turn, significantly contributes to climate change, threatening the delicate balance of our ecosystems. Considering this, we call for the cultivation and restoration of trees through afforestation. By planting trees, we can mitigate the environmental damage caused by tobacco farming, promote sustainable practices, and create a healthier planet for future generations.

The Southern Africa Youth Forum Health Cluster remains committed to working alongside government bodies, non-governmental organizations, CSOs, the private sector, and communities to promote policies and initiatives that regulate the use of tobacco and protect the health of young people. We urge stakeholders to join hands in raising awareness and creating an environment that discourages tobacco use, ensuring a healthier future for all. We appreciate some member states of SADC who have already taken steps to regulate the use of tobacco.

Thank you all for attending the Regional Press Conference

Kindly follow and check the following SAYoF social media handles and website for more information.

- Website: <http://sadc youth forum.org> / Organization Website: <https://sayof.org/>
- Twitter: SAYOF_SADC



- Facebook: @SAYoF_SADC
- Instagram: @sayof.sadc
- #SADCYouth #SADCYouthForum

Thank you all!