CAPHRA
COALITION OF ASIA PACIFIC
TOBACCO HARM REDUCTION ADVOCATES

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: Monday 16 November 2026
The Coalition of Asia Pacific Tobacco Harm Reduction Advocates (CAPHRA)

Asia Pacific needs a WHO leader who listens, says CAPHRA

CAPHRA is putting three questions to all seven WHO Director-General candidates as the Geneva forum opens on 18 November.

WELLINGTON 16 November 2026: Seven candidates for WHO Director-General face member states in Geneva from 18 November. The Coalition of Asia Pacific Tobacco Harm Reduction Advocates (CAPHRA) wants each to say how they would listen to doctors, patients and consumers. CAPHRA takes no position on any candidate.

The call follows a petition from Indonesian medical professors and anti-corruption groups asking the WHO Executive Board to reject Indonesia's nominee, Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin. The Coalition for Health Justice's 12-page dossier, dated 4 November, alleges that doctors and academics who criticised government health policy were marginalised or penalised. Indonesia's Health Ministry did not respond to Health Policy Watch before publication, and Sadikin's campaign said it would reply later.

"A future WHO Director-General must be able to listen to the people who see the failures of a health system first: healthcare workers and their patients," coalition representative Dr Puspita Wijayanti told Health Policy Watch.

CAPHRA says consumers deserve the same hearing.

"Doctors, patients and consumers live with health policy long after it is written," said Nancy Loucas, CAPHRA's Executive Coordinator. "Our region needs a WHO leader who hears them and follows the evidence wherever it leads."

"Adults who have switched away from cigarettes know what works in practice," said Clarisse Virgino, CAPHRA's Philippines representative. "A WHO leader should ask them before writing the rules."

CAPHRA is sending these questions to all seven campaigns and will publish any replies:

1. How would you involve consumers and people with lived experience in WHO policy, including on nicotine and tobacco?
2. How would you weigh evidence on lower-risk products against risks to young people?
3. How would you protect health workers who criticise policy?

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The first candidates' forum runs 18–19 November and is webcast. In late January the Executive Board will shortlist five candidates and nominate up to three. The World Health Assembly appoints the Director-General in May 2027.

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