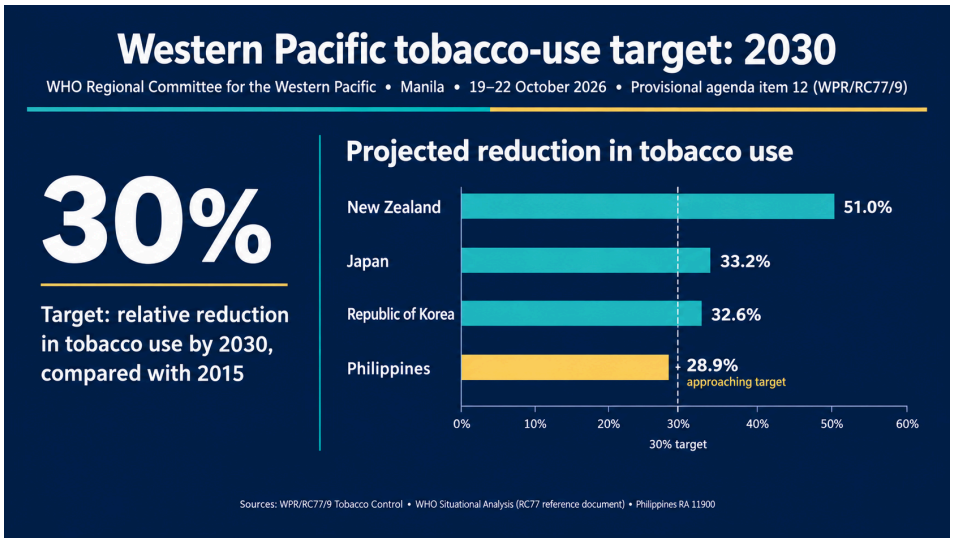
CAPHRA
COALITION OF ASIA PACIFIC
TOBACCO HARM REDUCTION ADVOCATES

CAPHRA Questions Why WHO Overlooks Its Tobacco-Control Success Stories.

Manila, Philippines [5 October 2026] - Whilst New Zealand is on track to cut tobacco use faster than any other country in the Western Pacific, according to the World Health Organization's own figures, their suggested discussion Tobacco Control doesn't acknowledge this or examine how it has been achieved.

The tobacco-control item scheduled for discussion at the Seventy-seventh session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Western Pacific (WPRO) in Manila is an important moment for Member States. The agenda includes WPR/RC77/9, Tobacco Control, together with a situational analysis intended to accelerate progress toward the Region's 2030 tobacco-control target. The proposal to *"increase prices on all tobacco and nicotine products in line with WHO FCTC Article 6 and its guidelines"* is not within the remit of Article 6, which applies only to tobacco. The statement that *"Taxation must also extend to e-cigarettes and other nicotine products where legally sold."* is also not within the remit of Article 6.

WHO's analysis finds only eight of 26 countries on track for a 30% cut by 2030. New Zealand leads with a projected 51% reduction. Japan (33.2%) and the Republic of Korea (32.6%) are also on track. All three give adult smokers access to lower-risk alternatives: vaping in New Zealand, heated tobacco in Japan and Korea, yet the draft plan does not name them. It prioritises taxation and established measures, and tells countries to "ban or strictly regulate" e-cigarettes, heated tobacco and nicotine pouches - completely misinterpreting Article 6 of the FCTC to cover nicotine, when it only covers tobacco.



"WHO's own figures show the Region's best performers. Its plan doesn't ask what they did," said Nancy Loucas, Executive Coordinator of the Coalition of Asia Pacific Tobacco Harm Reduction

Advocates (CAPHRA). "Delegates should ask why before endorsing rules that treat every nicotine product like a cigarette."

What CAPHRA is proposing

In this white paper, CAPHRA calls for a time-bound, Member State-led study before WHO issues more guidance. It would examine product risks, switching, youth uptake and illicit markets, under the WHO treaty's conflict-of-interest rules (Article 5.3), with no industry involvement.

CAPHRA supports strong tobacco taxes and youth protection, and agrees high youth vaping rates in some Pacific countries demand action. It also wants the plan to do more on tobacco in betel quid, a major cause of oral cancer in Pacific communities.

WHO projects the host country, the Philippines, will fall just short, at 28.9%. Unlike most neighbours, it regulates vapes rather than banning them.

"The Philippines is close. The evidence from New Zealand, Japan and Korea could help us get there," said Clarisse Virgino-Adriatico, CAPHRA's Philippines representative. "Delegates in Manila should study it, not set it aside."

Questions for delegates

- Why does the plan not examine three of the eight countries on track?
- Should Member States lead an independent review before WHO endorses undifferentiated restrictions?

"Tobacco kills around 3 million people in this Region every year," Loucas said. "We cannot afford to overlook what is already working."

Loucas and Virgino-Adriatico will attend the Asia Forum on Nicotine 2026 (AFN26) in Manila on 16–17 October and will be available for in person interviews on the 17th of October.

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