

people in Qatar, becoming only the second Gulf charitable institution to receive one of these grants. PM says its grant scheme aims to honour institutions that care about handicapped and elderly people in the GCC states. It has not specified whether institutions looking after people with disabilities caused by smoking are eligible to apply.

Meanwhile, a brochure distributed in Oman by the industry's Middle East Tobacco Association (META) to retailers, full of industry language affirming that "smoking is an adult choice", ended with the assertion, "Supported by the Department of Health Education and Information". META, a coalition of companies including PM, BAT, and Japan Tobacco International, claimed the scheme was launched in 1998 with full governmental approval, but on receiving a strong demand for its removal a year later, agreed to drop any mention of the ministry of health in future educational materials. META's response could not resist the repetition of the very essence of the industry's cynical and opportunistic

line on youth education: that whatever disagreements there might be with health experts, "the issue of juvenile smoking is one where there is total accord".

Instructive background information on both types of activity described above can be found in PM's draft corporate affairs plan dated 25 November 1987. Boasting that PM and the industry are "positively impacting the government decisions of Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the UAE [United Arab Emirates] through the creative use of market specific studies, position papers, [and] well briefed distributors who lobby media owners and consultants", the plan detailed some of the strategies for continued success. These included cooperation with Rothmans and Gallaher to try to prevent a GCC consensus on tax harmonisation and, interestingly, the need to continue to support "our UAE distributor and his business partner, the finance minister, with arguments and studies".

Fighting further emission reductions and disclosure requirements, working closely with Kuwaiti media

owners to fight the proposals of the minister of health, the need to use organisations supported through sports sponsorships to "publicise the benefits", and strengthening the GCC chapters of the International Advertisers Association, were also spelt out.

Perhaps most sinister, however, were the plans to "[r]ecruit a consultant who can help us monitor and influence the Alexandria based WHO office which helps prepare GCC health plans", and to "[w]ork to develop a system by which Philip Morris can measure trends on the issue of smoking and Islam. Identify Islamic religious leaders who oppose interpretations of the Quran which would ban the use of tobacco and encourage support for these leaders".

Since then, fortunately, WHO's position and infrastructure on tobacco control has been significantly strengthened, and there are also signs of progress in the involvement of religious leaders in support of health. Countries in the Gulf region are relatively free from concerns about employment in the tobacco sector, and their wealth can help guard against undue influence from tobacco money. However, as is clear from current activities and past plans, tobacco companies have no intention of letting health policy take its course in the region, and health advocates will have to fight every inch of the way.

## The big disappointment: USA weak on convention

President Clinton is known to be strongly against tobacco, but it remains unclear whether his government will actively support the World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). At the first meeting of the working group on the FCTC in Geneva in October 1999, the well prepared US delegation was only in favour of addressing non-compliance with FCTC requirements by consultations and diplomatic means, not by binding mechanisms. It seemed that the American delegation could only accept what was already in place in the USA, or what did not need to be ratified by the Senate. A total ban on advertising was certainly not acceptable for "constitutional" reasons.

The attitude of the American delegation at the WHO consultative technical conference on the FCTC in New Delhi from 7 to 9 January 2000



USA: Virginia Slims find your voice campaign. In what appears to be an appeal to back to roots sentiments, this advert portraying a woman in Africa is thought to be aimed at US African American women. It contrasts with cigarette advertising in African countries where western, especially American, models are often featured.

was even worse. The aim of this meeting was to obtain a developing country perspective towards the negotiation of the WHO framework convention with participants from 50 developing countries. The draft resolution of the conference was discussed in the working groups and did not call for a total ban on advertising but mentioned, “deploring all direct advertising, marketing, promotion, sponsorship, and other practices by the tobacco industry aimed at encouraging the use of tobacco”. The American delegates in two working groups asked to add “advertising . . . aimed at encouraging the use of tobacco *by children and young adults*”.

According to the American delegation, the text without their suggested addition could imply a total ban on tobacco advertising, which was unacceptable to their government. In my working group there was no agreement to accept this addition, but I was

surprised that the addition was finally included in the final declaration. When the chairman of the meeting asked in the final plenary session whether everybody could agree with the final declaration, I asked for the floor and proposed to add one word—“especially”—to the declaration, as follows: “encouraging the use of tobacco, especially by children and young adults”. My main justification was that advertising is not only aimed at youngsters or young adults. The promotion of light cigarettes, for example, has kept many middle aged people smoking who otherwise could have stopped. Even the US surgeon general’s report of 1998 admits that advertising might increase tobacco consumption by encouraging adults to take up smoking or undermining existing smokers’ motivation to give up.

The addition of the word “especially” was, however, not acceptable to

the American delegation, and after some discussion it was decided to keep the declaration as it was. My feeling was that the American delegation had been overreacting. I do not see the link between a consideration in a consultative technical conference resolution and the automatic obligation for all countries to ban all tobacco advertising. But, even more worrying, it seems that the most powerful country in the world, and the home country of the world’s largest international cigarette producer, may not fully support an international solution for an international problem. A bitter disappointment for health can only mean big satisfaction for the tobacco industry in its global war against health.

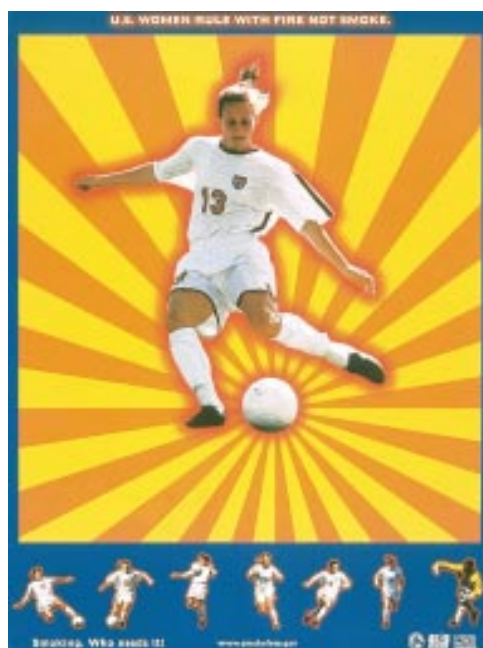
LUK JOOSSENS

*Consultant,*

*International Union Against Cancer,*

*Brussels*

*Joosens@globalink.org*



*This poster for the US women’s soccer team highlights the fact that all the players are non-smokers, regularly lending their celebrity status to help the fight against smoking among young American women.*