

31 May 2001

**Statement of H.E. Mr. Harri Holkeri,
President of the 55th Session of the General Assembly,
on the occasion of World No-Tobacco Day**

Today we join the World Health Organization in observing May 31 as World No-Tobacco Day, focusing on the often-overlooked adverse effects of second-hand smoke.

The adverse health effects of second-hand smoke are the same as those caused by regular smoking: lung cancer and heart disease top the list in both cases. Where children are involved, second-hand smoke can also cause asthma, respiratory disease, middle ear disease and sudden infant death syndrome. Smoking is also a fast-spreading cause of indoor air pollution, not helped much by ventilation or courtesy towards non-smokers.

Second-hand smoke is one of the critical issues facing tobacco companies today. Fortunately, increased public knowledge about the hazards of second-hand smoke and smoking restrictions at workplaces have been seen to significantly lower both the consumption and, ultimately, the demand for tobacco products.

There is no safe level of exposure to second-hand smoke, which is recognized as a public health hazard - not just as a mere discomfort for non-smokers. It is well known that tobacco and second-hand smoke undermine our health and physical performance and we need to act on that knowledge.

I strongly support the World Health Organization in its efforts to promote a healthier life for all.