

We strongly support the announcements of UNION.

To citizens of Japan

Dr. Manabu Sakuta, Chairperson, Japan Society for Tobacco Control, General incorporated
And 20 other organizations.

On April 3, the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease, an international organization of respiratory and pulmonary specialists and healthcare professionals, requested smokers to quit smoking to reduce the risk of the new coronavirus infection particularly and the harms to the respiratory system more generally. It also appealed to tobacco companies to suspend the manufacture and sale of their products. We strongly supports these announcements.

There is no doubt of the serious effects from tobacco on the body. It is directly involved in many diseases affecting infants to the elderly, and worldwide it kills 5.5 million people a year from active smoking and 600,000 a year from passive smoking. Even without a pandemic, these losses are immensely burdensome for society.

With the pandemic of the new coronavirus, the Japan Society for Tobacco Control has reported that smoking increases the risk of contracting a severe infection of the new coronavirus by 1.66 times, based on the report from a Chinese research team at NEJM. In addition, we have previously announced that smoking increases the risk of being forced to use a respirator with the new coronavirus infection and of dying from the infection by 2.96 times. In particular, tobacco smoke inhalation damages the mucous membranes of the upper respiratory tract and alveoli, thereby reducing viral resistance and oxygen absorption. Furthermore, the European Center for Disease Control and Prevention (ECDC) also found that nicotine activates the angiotensin-converting enzyme 2 (ACE-2) receptor in the lungs and

other organs, thereby inducing ACE-2 and facilitating coronavirus uptake, and announced on March 25 that smoking history significantly exacerbates the risk of contracting pneumonia. The World Health Organization (WHO) has published similar views.

As the number of people infected with the new coronavirus and the number of deaths in Japan continue to increase, the government has declared a state of emergency in targeted areas, and the whole country has recognized the seriousness of the current situation. Until the contagion ends, we ask smokers to quit smoking to reduce the risk of serious infection not only for oneself and but to protect relatives and neighbors against infection as well.

A meeting of experts in Japan has announced three conditions that increase the incidence of groups of infected patients (clusters): 1) people being in poorly ventilated enclosed spaces, 2) people speaking and conversing (and exhaling) in close proximity and 3) people visiting crowded areas in close contact. Because smoking areas generally satisfy all three of these conditions, many municipalities and businesses across the country are starting to close them. These countermeasures are based on the belief that reducing outbreaks of clusters will significantly prevent the spread of contagion. However, because tobacco smoking is addictive, even closing public smoking areas will not completely end tobacco smoking, which by itself significantly exacerbates the risk of new coronavirus infection.

Therefore, we think that the best and most complete measures against the new coronavirus are to quit tobacco smoking and for the tobacco industry to stop producing, marketing and selling tobacco products, including heated tobacco and electronic vaporizers. In fact, because of the devastating effects of

tobacco for coronavirus infection and its contagion, tobacco sales have now been banned in all of South Africa and in some cities in India and the Philippines. As part of municipal lockdowns, tobacco retail and wholesale stores have also been closed because tobacco is not considered necessary for citizens.

In order to win the current global battle against the new coronavirus, those who smoke should immediately quit smoking. We also ask that tobacco companies, governments and related organizations stop the production and sale of tobacco products.