From Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP, Chair

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E-cigarettes

I understand that in September the European Commission will be considering the collective EU position of Member States to paper FCTC/COP/8/10 ("Progress report on regulatory and market developments on electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS) and electronic non-nicotine delivery systems (ENNDS)") which will be considered at the Eighth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in Geneva in October.

Ahead of those discussions I wanted to write to you to highlight my Committee's recent Report on e-cigarettes, which is based on evidence from over 90 organisations and individuals and oral evidence from 25 witnesses. On this basis of the evidence that we heard we concluded that "There is clear evidence that e-cigarettes are substantially less harmful than conventional cigarettes", a view supported by evidence from your department and Public Health England, among others. We made a number of recommendations to enable e-cigarettes to be promoted as a stop smoking tool, including streamlining processes to license them.

I welcome the fact that, in the UK, smoking rates have fallen steadily in recent decades, but there are still a significant number of people who continue to smoke conventional cigarettes. Smoking is the primary cause of preventable illness and premature death for 79,000 people each year in England alone. However, the evidence suggests that e-cigarettes help tens of thousands of people to quit smoking each year. We heard from Action on Smoking and Health, for example, that e-cigarettes are now the most popular aid for smokers trying to stop smoking, and are proving effective in helping many smokers to stop smoking—it is therefore important that steps are taken to enable the use of e-cigarettes to help decrease the number of smokers.

My Committee's Report was welcomed by a number of organisations, including Public Health England, Cancer Research UK, the British Lung Foundation, the Royal College of Physicians, the Royal Society for Public Health and Action on Smoking and Health.
I believe that the UK position on a number of possible actions listed in paper FCTC/COP/8/10 could be well-informed by my Committee’s Report, including proposals relating to:

- Exploring with the International Agency Research on Cancer (IARC) the possibility (subject to funding) of preparing a monograph that studies the evidence around the health and policy impacts of electronic nicotine delivery systems (including e-cigarettes); and
- Consideration of whether to develop specific regulations in a number of areas relating to ENDS in previous WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control decisions (FCTC/COP6(9) and FCTC/COP7(9)).

I know that you will want the UK position to be informed by the evidence and would be happy to discuss the Committee’s work in this area with you further. The Committee secretariat would also be happy to discuss the Committee’s work with your officials.

I have written in similar terms to Dr Vera Luiza da Costa e Silva, Head of the Convention Secretariat and Vytenis Andriukaitis, European Commissioner for Health & Food Safety.

I intend to publish this letter on the Committee’s website.

Yours,

Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP
Chair

I think it is really important that the WHO takes note of the strong case made in the UK which recognises the potential for harm reduction which results from people swapping smoking through snuff to vaping.