From Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP, Chair

Vytenis Andriukaitis
European Commissioner for Health & Food Safety
(by e-mail)

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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.

I chair the UK House of Commons Science and Technology Committee which has recently concluded an extensive piece of work on e-cigarettes and the evidence-base surrounding their use. We heard from over 90 organisations and individuals and took oral evidence from 25 witnesses and concluded that “There is clear evidence that e-cigarettes are substantially less harmful than conventional cigarettes”. On the basis of the evidence that we heard we made a number of recommendations to enable e-cigarettes to be promoted as a stop smoking tool.

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.
Paper FCTC/COP/8/10 lists a number of possible actions where I think my Committee’s Report and the UK experience might be of use in informing the discussion on the EU’s collective position, include:

- 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 EU’s collective position on their response to the proposals in paper FCTC/COP/8/10 to be based on the best available evidence. I am enclosing a link to my Committee’s evidence-based Report to inform your discussion:

https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmsctech/505/505.pdf

I would be grateful if you could share my letter and a link to my Committee’s Report with Member States.

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

Yours sincerely,

Rt Hon Norman Lamb MP
Chair