

Press release: Dr Patrick Dixon comment after keynote presentation at SmokeFree Northwest, Manchester UK, 6th March 2010.

"Smoking has fallen in response to government action but we have far to go. It is still the case that 6% of young people are already addicted to smoking by the time they are 15. Most of the 250,000 new smokers a year are under 18. Every one of them will die 10 years early as a direct result unless they find a way to kick the habit which is notoriously hard. Here are three actions which should be taken immediately.

"Taxes need to increase. It is absurd that the cost of smoking is the same in real terms as it was 15 years ago, when we know today so much more about the wider costs of smoking to society. For example, smoking costs the economy about £2.5 billion each year in terms of sick leave and lost productivity alone.

"Existing laws should be enforced, and made consistent with alcohol. For a start, tobacco retailers should be licensed which would mean numbers of outlets could be controlled. We also need to be much tougher on shops that repeatedly sell tobacco to under-age people.

"Advertising bans need to be tightened now. The government has agreed that larger retailers should be banned from in-store displays of tobacco products from 2013 – but why not from next year?"

\* Dr Patrick Dixon is Chairman Global Change Ltd and author of 13 books including The Truth about Drugs. He is also Founder of the international AIDS agency [ACET](#) .