

WHO readies for tobacco hearings

GENEVA (AP) — Anti-smoking campaigners say allowing tobacco companies to participate in hearings on a treaty aimed at cutting cigarette-related deaths is like letting a fox guard a hen house.

But that is the plan for the upcoming two-day World Health Organization (WHO) hearings on the proposed treaty. The hearings, which start Thursday, are expected to draw tobacco multinationals in addition to prestigious medical associations, health campaigners, smokers groups, and tobacco farmers and workers.

Derek Yach, head of WHO's non-communicable diseases program, said Tuesday that tobacco companies

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— Derek Yach WHO non-communicable disease program head

would be allocated five minutes each, just like other speakers during the hearings. The WHO is interested in hearing tobacco company scientists' views on progress toward less-harmful cigarettes.

“The tobacco companies are racing against each other to see who has the least-harmful product,” Yach said. “Before the U.S. litigation, there was no incentive to compete on health grounds. Now there is.”

The WHO's 191 member states will decide whether to take those views into account when they negotiate next week on the proposed Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, Yach said.

In drawing up the proposed pact,

governments will consider such measures as a global tobacco advertising ban, tougher health warnings, higher taxes, programs to cut production and tighter controls against sales to children, including a ban on vending machines.

WHO wants the treaty to be ready by 2003, in part to fight an upward trend in cigarette deaths. The U.N. health agency estimates that smoking kills more than 4 million people per year and says the toll may rise to 10 million per year by 2030 because of surging tobacco use in developing countries.

The public tobacco hearings — the first ever held by the United Nations — are expected to be heated, to put it mildly.

Aristide registers for Haitian presidential race

PORT-AU-PRINCE, Haiti (AP) — Former President Jean-Bertrand Aristide registered Monday to run in a presidential election that all major opposition parties are boycotting, virtually guaranteeing him victory.

Outside the electoral council of office where Aristide filed his candidacy, his supporters danced to a carnival band and shouted Aristide's campaign slogan: “Peace of Mind! Peace in the Belly!”

“Today we have taken a historic step on the road toward peace,” Aristide said as he left.

He had waited until the last day to register for the Nov. 26 elections, which will include nine seats and one in the House Assembly.

Aristide's victory is an unambiguous foregone conclusion with the opposition boycott, which leaves four other little-known candidates in the race. The opposition party charge May-July legislative elections were rigged to favor candidates allied to Aristide, who has claimed plotting to return Haiti to dictatorship.

Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian & Transgendered Aggies: You Have an ALLY

The individuals listed below are members of the Allies Program at Texas A&M. Each ALLY has attended a voluntary training seminar, has resource information available, and has pledged to provide a “safe haven”, a listening ear, and support for the gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgendered members of the Texas A&M community. If you need someone to talk to, contact an ALLY listed below, or look for the ALLY placard, posted near each ALLY's office or residence hall room.

- List of names and contact information for ALLY members, including names like Arnie Abels, Erin Brown, Robert Corbett, etc.

PFLAG logo and text: Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. The PFLAG Helpline: (409) 694-2617

Registration information: If you are willing to become an ALLY, training sessions are scheduled for Friday, 13 October, 2-5pm; Sunday, 29 October, 1-4pm; and Wednesday, 13 December, 5:30-9pm. REGISTER: please send e-mail to allies@tam.u.edu or call Gender Issues Education Services @ 845-1107. http://allies.tam.u.edu/