



The Environmental Rights Action/Friends of the Earth Nigeria (ERA/FoEN) has decried the delay by the National Assembly in the passage into law of the National Tobacco Control Bill. The agency said further delay in the passage of the bill may cost the nation more tobacco-related deaths.

The Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), which has been signed and ratified by over 168 countries including Nigeria came into force in 2005 and is the first treaty negotiated under the auspices of the World Health Organisation (WHO) to take global action against tobacco-related deaths. The WHO says tobacco-related deaths stand at 5.4 million people annually, and projects this will increase beyond eight million over the next two decades, with the majority of lives lost in developing countries. It, therefore, insists that strong worldwide enforcement and implementation of the FCTC could save 200 million lives by the year 2050.

Nigeria, which signed the FCTC in 2004 and ratified in 2005, has been recording more deaths relating to tobacco, especially cancer. "The fifth year of FCTC entering into force calls for sober reflection for us as a nation because in the last five years little progress has been made in domesticating the FCTC.

This has not been without a grave impact on the citizenry because within this period we have lost talented musicians, journalists and even doctors, no thanks to nearly no regulation of an industry that markets a lethal product in beautiful wraps," said ERA/FoEN Programme Manager, Akinbode Oluwafemi.

Oluwafemi pointed out that "Nigerians are unhappy with the slow response of government to public health protection especially with the way the tobacco control bill has been neglected after the public hearing held in July 2009. We are further dismayed that there is an alleged clandestine moves by tobacco lobbyists to compromise our law makers with the intent of thwarting the passage of the national tobacco control bill."

"How else can you explain our law makers foot-dragging on the bill nearly one year after the public hearing? This action is anti-people and seriously compromises our democracy. Our lawmakers should stand by the people who have spoken in unison at the public hearing and abide by the principles of the FCTC which has reduced tobacco-related deaths in countries that have implemented the provisions"

The Director-General of the WHO, Dr. Margaret Chan, said recent studies estimates that full implementation of just four cost-effective measures set out in the FCTC could prevent 5.5 million deaths within a decade.

Source: [The Nation Newspapers](#)