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## COLLEGE OF HEALTH SCIENCES OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL

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### PRESS RELEASE

#### **MAKERERE TO HOST THE AFRICA TOBACCO CONTROL RESOURCE CENTRE**

The School of Public Health under Makerere University College of Health Sciences has been selected by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to host the Africa Tobacco Control Resource Centre. This follows the launch of the Africa Tobacco Control Project by WHO, with the financial support of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation. The project will work with countries in Sub-Saharan Africa to build capacity for tobacco control.

African countries are faced with a double burden of disease as the Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs) are increasingly becoming common. Tobacco is one of the major contributors to Non-Communicable Diseases (NCDs).

Under this project, WHO will initially provide technical assistance to five (5) countries, namely Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, Angola and Mauritania to implement rapid policy change strategies for tobacco control. A WHO team of national and international experts were in Kampala from 19<sup>th</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> June 2011 carrying out a capacity assessment of the country to advance tobacco control interventions. These interventions are the key demand and supply reduction measures enshrined under the Framework Convention on Tobacco control (FCTC) – the first global health treaty negotiated under the WHO.

The major thrust of the centre will be to build regional capacity to sustain tobacco control interventions. The Resource Centre will develop tools and programs to assist Sub-Saharan Africa countries in their efforts to arrest the tobacco epidemic.

The process of selecting the School of Public Health followed competitive bidding involving 20 countries in Sub Saharan Africa. The award was announced on June 24<sup>th</sup>

2011 by the WHO Representative to Uganda Dr. Joachim Saweka at their Kampala offices in Kololo.

“The College of Health Sciences has consistently shown commitment to being at the forefront of innovations and bringing on board grants. I hope that the centre will be used effectively in terms of controlling the impact of tobacco”, Makerere University Deputy Vice Chancellor for Finance and Administration, Dr. Sandy Steven Tickodri Togboa applauded.

The WHO Tobacco Free Initiative Senior Advisor, Dr. Vinayak Prasad said the developed world has agreed to ban the exorbitant advertising and promotions that the tobacco firms engage in. “The whole region needs to get capacity to do this; the centre should be able to develop this capacity by training legislators, health workers, media practitioners and other stakeholders”, he said.

The Dean School of Public Health, Dr. William Bazeyo said “the initial phase of establishment of the centre will be funded to the tune of USD 3.4 million. It will provide very concrete support to countries for sustainable capacity for tobacco control to protect populations from the effects of tobacco and smoking”.

The consumption of various forms of tobacco products (cigarettes, pipes, sheeshah, smokeless/chewing tobacco such as pan masala, gutkha, etc) is fast increasing in many countries in Africa. The tobacco industry is effectively targeting this part of the world due to laxity in regulation.

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