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Brussels,

Dear State Secretary,

Thank you for your letter of 2 March 2020, in which you raise the issue of tobacco control and more specifically the measurement methods for tar, nicotine and carbon monoxide (TNCO) in cigarette smoke.

As regards tobacco control in general, I agree with you that tobacco use is the most important risk factor for cancer and responsible for approximately 22% of cancer deaths.¹ While tobacco control is not explicitly mentioned in my Mission letter, I can assure you that I am fully committed to further strengthen the EU efforts to reduce tobacco consumption, notably in the context of “Beating Cancer Action Plan” and I count on your commitment and support on this important matter.

As regards the measurement methods, you call for replacing the ISO methodology used for the measurement of tar, nicotine and carbon monoxide in cigarettes by the Canadian Intense method designed to reflect certain aspects of smoking behaviour. While we are aware of the limitations of currently available methods for the measurement of tar, nicotine and carbon monoxide in cigarettes, please note that the issue was carefully considered during the Tobacco Products Directive revision when it has been agreed that the ISO methodology should continue to be used for emission measurement.

Mr Paul Blokhuis
State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sport
P.O. Box 20350
2500 EJ The Hague
The Netherlands

¹ <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/cancer>

Nevertheless, the Commission may use its delegated power to amend the Tobacco Product Directive in this regard, if it is appropriate taking into consideration scientific and technical developments and the development of internationally agreed standards. In the meantime, we will continue to closely follow international developments and discussions, notably in the context of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and support further collaboration at the EU level in case of new scientific developments. The Commission will also report on the application of the Tobacco Products Directive, including on the development of internationally agreed rules and standards, by 2021.

I hope that you will find this information helpful and I look forward to our continued cooperation in this important area for the health of our citizens.

Yours sincerely,

(e-signed)

Stella Kyriakides

Cc:

Minister Magnus Heunicke, Denmark
Minister Tanel Kiik, Estonia
State Secretary Eila Eila Mäkipää, Finland
State Secretary Ásta Valdimarsdóttir, Iceland
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