

## VHAA welcomes move to make South Asia tobacco free by 2030



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Voluntary [Health](#) Association of Assam (VHAA) has welcomed the Dhaka Declaration on Sustainable [Development Goal](#) (SDG) action in South Asia which has endorsed initiative to make South Asia tobacco free by 2030.

"We welcome [India](#)'s decision to endorse the Dhaka Declaration to make South Asia tobacco-free by 2030. It is also indeed very commendable and significant that Indian Legislators are also leading from the front in the context of tobacco control. The Hon. Speaker of Lok Sabha, Sumitra Mahajan has reiterated [India](#)'s commitment in the [war against](#) the tobacco epidemic, including [India](#)'s new warning labels," said Ruchira [Neog](#), Executive Secretary Voluntary [Health](#) Association of Assam.

The Dhaka declaration which was taken during the South Asian Speakers' Summit on Achieving the Sustainable [Development](#) Goals (SDGs) held at the [Bangladesh](#) capital on January 30 and 31, [2016](#), stated "We recognize that a tobacco-free South Asia by 2030 is important to ensuring health and wellbeing of the people of the region. [As](#) Speakers of [Parliament](#) in the region, we see the value of meeting on a regular basis to share experiences and best practices, [as](#) well [as](#) to review progress on the implementation of the SDGs."

Speakers of [Parliament](#) from Afghanistan, [Bangladesh](#), Bhutan, [India](#), Maldives and Sri Lanka, gathered in Dhaka, [Bangladesh](#), on 30 and 31 January [2016](#) for the South Asian Speakers' Summit on Achieving the Sustainable [Development](#) Goals (SDGs).

In South Asia, tobacco is the leading cause of non-communicable diseases, which in South Asia kills 1.5 million people annually of which 1 million in [India](#). South Asian [Parliament](#) speakers have agreed to prioritize tobacco control policies – in particular, those of the World [Health](#) Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), in their efforts to meet the SDGs and to achieve a tobacco-free South Asia by 2030.

[India](#) will host the second meeting of South Asian Speakers' Forum in 2017.

Hon. Sumitra Mahajan, Speaker of the Lok Sabha, attended the event and chaired a session on "The role of parliaments in implementing the SDGs."

Voluntary [Health](#) Association of Assam, a premier non-profit organization working in the field of public [health](#).

For the last few years VHAA has been working concerted on the issue of tobacco control both through direct intervention initiatives and activities towards making smoke free districts and tobacco free educational institutions, [as](#) well [as](#) through high [level](#) advocacy and campaigning for [policy level](#) changes towards tobacco control.

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