



## Secretariat

ST/IC/87/18  
30 March 1987

## INFORMATION CIRCULAR

To: Members of the staff

From: The Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management

Subject: QUESTIONNAIRE ON SMOKING ON UNITED NATIONS PREMISES

1. In the past year, there has been increasing medical evidence of the harmful effects of passive - or, as it is more formally called, "involuntary" - smoking (i.e., breathing other people's smoke).
2. In a circular distributed to staff of the World Health Organization (WHO) on 17 November 1986, it was stated that:

"The workplace is recognized by health authorities as being usually the place where the most substantial exposure to passive smoking occurs. It has been calculated that a non-smoking office worker sharing the office with a smoker could inhale the equivalent of a few cigarettes per day in smoke particles.

"Air conditioning, while filtering out particulate matter, does not filter out carbon monoxide and other gaseous components of tobacco smoke. Actually, by recirculating the air, the conditioning systems tend to concentrate such gaseous substances, thus leading to headaches and other complaints. Because of limiting engineering factors, even increased ventilation rates are inadequate to remove the pollutants fully.

"Studies from the United States Environmental Protection Agency indicate that, short of complete physical separation of smokers and non-smokers on independent ventilation systems (clearly an unrealistic solution), restriction of smoking at the workplace is the only feasible solution for reducing the lung cancer risk from passive smoking to below the risk level considered acceptable by regulatory health agencies for carcinogens in air, water and food."

3. Some people are seriously allergic to smoke and many non-smokers naturally resent their clothes smelling of smoke. For all the above reasons, it is now necessary to have greater control of where individuals can smoke within the various United Nations buildings.

4. In 1983, the General Assembly decided that smoking should be prohibited in small conference rooms (e.g., rooms A to E) and discouraged in larger conference rooms (e.g., rooms 1 to 4). In 1984, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) asked its staff not to smoke in conference and meeting rooms, dining rooms and lounge areas on UNICEF premises.

5. In early 1985, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) banned smoking in its smaller conference rooms and discouraged smoking in the larger rooms. In a 13 August 1985 circular (ST/IC/85/42) to all staff members, the United Nations announced that it was taking a similar step. Regarding smoking in offices, this circular stated that:

"When staff members are required to share offices or working areas, supervisors should to the extent possible separate smokers and non-smokers. If this cannot be done and a smoker and a non-smoker are required to share an office or working area, arrangements concerning smoking should be agreed between the staff members concerned."

6. However, as there is now more evidence of the dangers of passive smoking, it is obvious that more stringent measures regarding smoking at work are necessary. In 1986, the Pan American Health Organization (the WHO Regional Office for the Americas) decided that "it should set an example by establishing non-smoking as the norm on all premises of the organization". WHO itself will prohibit smoking in its headquarters buildings from 7 April 1987 (World Health Day), except for a few areas not strictly related to work.

7. UNICEF recently stated that all its premises and vehicles would soon become "smoke-free environments", except in limited, specifically designated areas. This will happen, in New York, when UNICEF moves from the Alcoa building to the new UNICEF House (DC-3), or no later than 7 May 1987 should the move occur later.

8. The New York State Public Health Council recently adopted new regulations on smoking, which will become effective on 7 May 1987. These include no smoking in lobbies, waiting rooms, restrooms, elevators, conference halls, banks, hospitals and taxis. In all restaurants with more than 50 seats, 70 per cent of the area must be non-smoking (smoking will still be allowed in bars). At work, there should be no smoking at all, except in certain designated areas.

9. The Under-Secretary-General for Administration and Management has established a working group to advise him on the question of smoking in the various United Nations buildings in New York. The working group would like to know the views of the staff on the introduction of further restrictions on smoking in the United Nations and for that purpose the group has drawn up a questionnaire on the subject (see the annex to the present information circular). It is also important that existing restrictions, as defined in information circular ST/IC/85/43, should be

strictly enforced and that, in the cafeteria, there should only be smoking in the designated areas.

10. Please complete the questionnaire by checking the appropriate boxes and adding comments at the end. If you have any specific questions or points to raise, please contact one of the following members of the working group: Karen Barrett (room S-525B), Martin Bender (room S-2249B), François Giuliani (room S-378B), Michael Irwin (room S-567) or Ercan Murat (room DC1-1628). The completed questionnaire should be returned to the Medical Service, room S-546, by 17 April 1987.

Annex

QUESTIONNAIRE ON SMOKING ON UNITED NATIONS PREMISES

1. On the basis of what you have just read (and keeping in mind the important fact that "passive smoking" can be harmful), are you in favour of further restrictions on smoking being introduced?

Yes  No

2. Would you prefer smoking at work to be:

	<u>Unrestricted</u>	<u>Restricted</u>	<u>Banned</u>
In public areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Corridors?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lounges?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Shared working areas?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Individual offices?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restaurants and cafeterias?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Restrooms?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. Should smoking be limited to a few designated areas?

Yes  No

4. Do you smoke? Yes  No

5. If you are a smoker:

(a) Do you want to join a programme, in the United Nations, to help you stop smoking?

Yes  No

(b) If you are trying to stop this habit, do you think it will be helpful to you to have greater restrictions?

Yes  No

6. Please give any general comments you might have on this subject:

To ensure the validity of this poll, please sign this form (unsigned forms will not be counted in this poll).

(Signature)

(Name, printed)

(Department/office)

NOTE: Please return the questionnaire to the Medical Service, room S-567, by 17 April 1987.

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