

death rates are much higher than in countries such as France, Portugal and Spain where a lower prevalence rate of smoking in the past currently results in a lower lung cancer death rate.

Although the tobacco industry has generated jobs, tax dollars, and contributed to the arts and sports, the enormous health costs, such as 40,000 tobacco-related deaths in Canada every year, have become too expensive for society. Children are particularly vulnerable to marketers of tobacco products which target attractive "lifestyle" advertisements at current and potential customers - including adolescents. The use of tobacco by children is primarily the result of peer pressure, a desire for social acceptance, an assertion of independence, a desire to appear adult and a means for weight loss. Teenagers believe they can readily stop smoking - but their bodies become physiologically dependent on nicotine, a potent psychoactive drug.

Women who combine smoking with alcohol, who use over-the-counter medications and oral contraceptives have a ten-fold risk of heart attack. Women smokers are at a higher risk than non-smokers for cardiovascular disease and gynecological disorders. Surveys suggest that women under 30 are smoking more.

Children, in particular the very young, are most susceptible to health problems caused by exposure to second-hand smoke which increases their risk of developing middle ear disease and serious respiratory disorders such as bronchitis, pneumonia and asthma. Regular exposure to second-hand smoke can lead to a reduction in a child's lung function, increasing the risk of developing chronic obstructive lung disease later in life.

**Action plan:**

1. urge their governments to address the economic and health costs of smoking;
2. support measures to help youth and women resist the impact of tobacco advertising;
3. encourage development of partner support groups, recovery programs, counselling and positive role models at home, school and in the community;
4. urge the development of spiral education programmes so tobacco education is reinforced at various stages of schooling;
5. support programmes by health care professionals emphasizing the addictive nature of tobacco use.

## **ENVIRONMENT**

### **13) RESOLUTION ON HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT** *Proposed by the French Association of University Women*

The 26th Conference resolves:

**that NFAs ask their respective governments without delay to give priority to the development of:**

- 1. a campaign together with other governments to combat pollution problems. All countries have a joint responsibility for the protection**

of the ozone layer and biodiversity; they cannot accept that some should acquire *permission to pollute*;

2. specific strategies and concrete ecological measures to master the runaway pollution of vast metropolitan areas condemned by HABITAT II;
3. steps to create awareness among both adults and children of the gravity of these problems and to initiate environmental education programmes.

**Supporting statement:**

*Serious pollution problems condemned on several occasions by resolutions of the International Federation of University Women (1971 n° 9, 1989 n°2, 1995 n°17), and underlined at two recent environment summit meetings – the Summit of the Group of Eight (Denver, June 1997) and the third session of the Conference of States Parties to the United Nations Convention on Climatic Change (Kyoto, December 1997) are rapidly increasing and these problems have a serious impact on the health of populations, particularly that of girls, as young children and teenagers.*

**Action plan:**

1. pursuing study and research on this problem;
2. networking with other associations on national and local levels;
3. activation of the environment (and health) network of the International Federation of University Women;
4. lobbying governments for the establishment of coordinated health and environment policies.

**14) RESOLUTION ON DESERTIFICATION AND DEVELOPMENT**  
*Proposed by the Canadian Federation of University Women*

The 26<sup>th</sup> Conference resolves:

**that NFAs urge their governments to ratify the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification in Those Countries Experiencing Serious Drought and or Desertification, Particularly in Africa, and furthermore to:**

1. promote the full participation of local women in political, economic and technical decision-making in areas affected by drought and desertification;
2. support research on, and the transfer of, alternative renewable energy technologies such as solar and wind, for individual and community use; and
3. support the dissemination of culturally specific information on economically viable, environmentally sound, and socially acceptable alternative renewable energy technologies, and on the more efficient use of traditional methods to communities and families.