Plain packaging of tobacco products never intended as ‘silver bullet’

It complements anti-smoking measures, such as the ban on point-of-sale display

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For The Straits Times

The recent proposal to introduce standardised tobacco packaging has elicited strong responses from diverse sectors.

World Health Organization (WHO) director general Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who visited Singapore recently, said standardised packaging is an effective way to reduce tobacco consumption worldwide. However, some have raised concerns regarding its effectiveness. The perception is that standardised packaging might encourage smoking by making tobacco products look more attractive.

In an interview with The Straits Times, he acknowledged that it is important to combine different measures to effectively reduce tobacco use.

He said: "It is true that standardised packaging might reduce the attractiveness of tobacco products, but it is also important to remember that other factors, such as price, marketing, and health warnings, also play a role in influencing smoking behaviour.

In any case, the key point is to implement a comprehensive strategy to address tobacco use, and standardised packaging is just one component of this strategy. It is important to raise awareness about the health risks of smoking and to encourage people to quit smoking. No single measure will be sufficient on its own, and a combination of approaches is needed to achieve significant reductions in tobacco use."