



Photo caption: A glimpse of the first cigarettes with plain packaging entering the market in Oman. April 2024.

Photo credit: Ministry of Health Oman

29 April 2024 | Oman has rolled out plain packaging for tobacco products, a pioneering move in tobacco control. It is only the second country in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, after Saudi Arabia, to adopt this groundbreaking measure.

Thanks to this progressive move, Oman joins an exclusive group of 25 countries worldwide that are committed to combating tobacco use through innovative policies.

## **Why plain packaging?**

Plain packaging strips tobacco products of all branding – no colours, no logos, no glamour. This policy aims to diminish the allure of tobacco products, especially among young people, by allowing only a plain, unattractive, uniform look for packaging, while amplifying health warnings.

Research shows the transformative impact of plain packaging: it dulls the appeal of tobacco, enhances the effectiveness of health warnings and reduces smoking rates. When every packet looks bland and the same as the next, taking up smoking seems less glamorous, and potential new smokers are deterred.

## **Oman's decade-long effort to enact the policy**

The move to plain packaging in Oman was no overnight feat – it was a strategic, decade-long journey of ongoing dialogue between various national, regional and global stakeholders.

Oman's Ministry of Health and Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion led this effort, with support from the WHO country, regional and global offices. The Secretariat of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control also provided guidance.

Following these intensive efforts, in early 2023, a decisive ministerial decree by the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion made plain packaging mandatory across Oman.

In late April 2024, tobacco products with plain packaging were finally officially introduced on the market in Oman. The Consumer Association will remove all old stock and old packaging by July 2024.

## **Trailblazing example with global ripple effects**

Oman's introduction of plain packaging is a crucial advance in tobacco control, not only nationally but also regionally and globally. This bold move sets a powerful example for other

nations to follow, especially in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

It also serves as inspiration that substantial public health advances can be achieved through tenacity and collaboration. Oman's initiative can encourage more countries to embrace similar measures, potentially saving millions of lives worldwide.

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