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Health - Interactive Panel
Tobacco -- "The Challenge of the New Millennium"

by Kate Goddard, Beverly & District Club, Yorkshire Region, SIGBI

Chairman -- Shiela Lungley, SI Programme Coordinator, Health, Helena Club, Western Australia Region, SISWP

Moderator -- Jane Zimmerman, SI President-Elect

Following the new form of procedure for the interactive panel on Education this morning, we heard three introductory speakers, followed by questions from the floor to the panel.

The first speaker was Inger Nordback, one of our SI representatives at Geneva. She began by explaining our relationships with the UN and its various agencies.

On the last occasion that SI's consultative status with UNESCO was re-evaluated, we were not only re-approved but also invited to become a partner in a special project on tobacco related health problems -- with a particular focus on tobacco and women.

A guest speaker, Mergaretha Haglund (lecturer from the University of Uppsala), President of the International Network of Women Against Tobacco, drew our attention to the way in which the tobacco trade regards women and developing countries as targets for increasing their sales.

She also pointed out that there were more health risks for women than men and that women who smoke like men will die like men and perhaps earlier. She recommended that we should educate ourselves and others about the issues.

- (a) Clean up our own offices and homes
- (b) Speak out
- (c) Become active members of the tobacco control movement

Action has to start NOW.

Our third speaker was one of our own chatline members, Maria-Jose Elias from SI of Lisboa-Sete Collinas, Portugal. She presented us with some scary figures about the increasing smoking of tobacco among women and the reluctance of national governments to promote anti-smoking measures because of the tax revenues that they receive for tobacco sales.

The response from the floor was enthusiastic in support of the anti-tobacco campaign.

It was interesting to note a rather large number of empty seats at this session. I wonder if these were seats previously occupied by smokers!