Despite a stubborn grip on 1.25 billion adults, global tobacco use is retreating, driven back by a 25% decline since 2000, according to a World Health Organization (WHO) report.

However, cracks still appear in this victory – missed targets, uneven progress, and a resurgent tobacco industry fanning the flames of addiction.

While 150 countries, like Brazil and the Netherlands, champion strong control measures, others wrestle with higher prevalence.

Dr. Ruediger Krech, Director of WHO Department of Health Promotion says, “

Good progress has been made in tobacco control in recent years, but there is no time for complacency. I’m astounded at the depths the tobacco industry will go to pursue profits at the expense of countless lives. We see that the minute a government thinks they have won the fight against tobacco the tobacco industry seizes the opportunity to manipulate health policies and sell their deadly products,”

The WHO South-East Asia and Europe regions bear the heaviest burden, with Europe projected to claim the top spot by 2030.

Worryingly, Europe’s women, smoking at double the global average, are quitting at a glacial pace.

The world missed the 2025 target of a 30% reduction, landing at 25%. Even more chilling are the six countries, including Indonesia and Egypt, where tobacco use is rising, a grim reminder of the fight’s fragility.

But the true villain lurks in the shadows. The tobacco industry, ever the serpent in paradise, is slithering back into influence, manipulating policies and lobbying against life-saving measures.

WHO calls for vigilance, urging countries to bolster control efforts and resist the industry’s toxic charm.

Beyond the statistics, a starker picture emerges: children as young as 13 are ensnared in the nicotine web, jeopardizing future generations.

The upcoming WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control meeting in Panama hangs in the balance, threatened by industry machinations.

This fight demands more than just numbers. It’s a war against insidious tactics, a battle for lives and a future free from tobacco’s grip.

To win, we must safeguard youth, empower nations, and raise a collective voice against industry interference. Only then can we truly stub out this pernicious evil and breathe easier.