



Deputy Minister of Public Health Dr Ahmad Jan Naeem delivers his speech during the World No Tobacco Day event in Kabul Kabul 31 May 2015 – Afghanistan’s Ministry of Public Health, WHO and partners marked the 2015 World No Tobacco Day today under the theme of ending the illicit trade of tobacco products. Ministry officials, UN and nongovernmental organizations representatives and the media attended the event that focused on the harms of the illicit tobacco trade for the health of the Afghan people and economy, as well as good governance. The illicit tobacco market may account for as much as one in every 10 cigarettes consumed globally.

In his speech, Deputy Minister of Public Health H.E. Dr Ahmad Jan Naeem emphasized that tobacco use was one of the major public health risks facing Afghanistan. “Illicit trade makes tobacco products more affordable and accessible to all people, especially the youth, it undermines tax policies and means less revenue for the government to spend on socioeconomic development, including health,” he said. “Afghanistan has ratified the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and is committed to its implementation to ensure better health for all Afghans.”

Data on illicit trade and tobacco use is limited in Afghanistan. According to the Global Youth Tobacco Survey of 2010, 23% of students aged 13–15 had smoked cigarettes and almost 40% of students live in homes where others smoke in their presence. Another study conducted in Kabul indicates that the prevalence of cigarette smoking among men aged 15 years and older is 35%. A multisectoral committee consisting of key ministries, including Ministries of Public Health, Interior, Education and Finance, is currently being set up to prepare a strategy and action plan for the prevention of illicit trade of tobacco products in Afghanistan.

“Tobacco is a serious health issue as it kills up to half of its users, accounts for one in 10 adult deaths and kills nearly 6 million people each year globally,” said Dr Rik Peepers, WHO Country Representative. “The illicit trade of tobacco poses major concerns for health, but also presents many economic and security concerns with its links to corruption, smuggling and

organized criminal networks. Stopping illicit trade of tobacco is a health priority and also a major economic and security contribution for Afghanistan.”

The tobacco epidemic is one of the biggest public health threats the world has ever faced: it kills around 6 million people a year and more than 600 000 of these deaths are the result of non-smokers being exposed to second-hand smoke. Smoking harms nearly every organ of the body and causes many diseases, such as cancer, heart disease, respiratory diseases and pregnancy complications.

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