



Kabul 18 June 2017 – Afghanistan’s Ministry of Public Health, WHO and partners marked the 2017 World No Tobacco Day in Kabul today under this year’s global campaign theme “Tobacco – a threat to development”. Ministry officials, UN and NGO representatives and the media attended the event that focused on the harms of the tobacco crisis for the health of the Afghan people, economy and sustainable development.

Tobacco is a serious health issue as it kills up to half of its users, accounts for one in 10 adult deaths and kills over 7 million people each year globally – almost 20 000 people every day. Data on tobacco use is limited in Afghanistan but according to the 2010 Global Youth Tobacco Survey, 16% of youth aged 13-15 had smoked cigarettes and almost 40% live in homes where others smoke in their presence. Another study conducted in Kabul indicates that over 35% of men aged 15 and older smoke cigarettes.

The Minister of Public Health H.E. Dr Ferozuddin Feroz emphasized that tobacco use is one of the major public health risks facing Afghanistan. “There are clear links between tobacco control and sustainable development. We need to scale up our joint efforts to control the tobacco epidemic to protect all Afghans from the harms of tobacco use and to reduce its toll on our national economy,” Dr Feroz said.

In efforts to control tobacco use, the Ministry of Public Health has formed a special commission to implement tobacco control legislation and has increased taxation of tobacco products by

100%. The Ministry has also developed legislation for smoke-free offices in public and private sectors, including smoke-free and hookah-free areas in restaurants, and has prohibited advertisements for tobacco products. Over 600 hookah pipes and hundreds of kilograms of tobacco have been confiscated from Kabul restaurants. Recently, WHO regional office in Cairo presented an award to Afghanistan due to the Ministry of Public Health’s accomplishments in tobacco control.

“WHO continues to support the Government of Afghanistan in implementing the key provisions of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control ratified in 2010 to tackle the tobacco burden in the country,” said Dr Rik Peepkorn, WHO Country Representative. “Much more needs to be done to control the tobacco epidemic. Adding higher taxes on tobacco is a crucial measure as tax revenue from tobacco products can be used to finance universal health coverage and other key development interventions in Afghanistan.”

The tobacco epidemic is one of the biggest public health threats the world has ever faced: it kills more than 7 million people a year and nearly 900 000 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.

To gather more data on tobacco use in Afghanistan for effective interventions, the Ministry of Public Health, in close collaboration with the Ministry of Education, will conduct a survey on tobacco use among youth in 27 schools in Kabul city. The Ministry will train 100 security officers from 17 Kabul districts on proper implementation of the tobacco control legislation, continues to carry out awareness raising campaigns in the country, and will conduct awareness raising workshops for 75 school managers and teachers to control tobacco use in schools.

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