



H.E. Dr Abdel Adawy, Minister of Health and Population, announces that smoking will be banned in all health facilities, with full support from Dr Henk Bekedam, WHO Representative in Egypt. His Excellency Dr Abdel Adawy, Minister of Health and Population, made a welcome announcement on 14 October, 2014 that all health facilities across Egypt will become smoke-free environments, committing to implementing a vital policy that will protect the lives of Egyptians.

The announcement was made following the launch of three key studies on tobacco in Egypt that highlighted the growing public health and economic cost to the country. The studies, released by the Ministry of Health and Population and the World Health Organization (WHO), explore major challenges facing tobacco control measures in Egypt: shisha and smokeless tobacco use among the youth; the tobacco health cost; and illicit tobacco trade.

The studies underlined significant challenges in Egypt's fight to control tobacco. Tobacco is a driving force in the rising epidemic of chronic diseases such as lung disease, lung cancer, ischaemic heart disease and stroke. The risk of these illnesses and premature mortality from tobacco use are increased by a growth in the illicit trade of cigarettes and an alarming increase in the use of shisha by young people.

Egypt has a high prevalence of smokers with 46% of adult men smoking and an increasing number of young female smokers. Nearly half of the population is exposed to second hand smoke in their homes, and public places such as hospitals, government departments and education facilities are not tobacco free.

Dr Henk Bekedam, WHO Representative in Egypt, applauded the Minister's announcement. "We greatly welcome His Excellency's timely message today. Implementing smoke-free policies

in health facilities nationwide is a basic but critical step in the fight to control tobacco in Egypt. Passive smoking is a serious threat to public health and affects those who have limited choice in the matter, including children. I look forward to this being extended to government buildings and education facilities.”

“However, smoke-free public environments are just one part of an effective package of tobacco control measures that need to be implemented to reduce the burden of tobacco in Egypt. This should also include taxation on tobacco products (including shisha) that rises with the rate of inflation, signing and implementing the Protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco and banning tobacco advertising to help to reduce smoking amongst young people.”

“These are just a few measures that can be undertaken to tackle tobacco. Egypt has shown great progress today and in past years with the introduction of health warnings on tobacco products and increased taxation. I encourage the Government of Egypt to continue in this positive direction.”

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