

WHO, in collaboration with the Parliamentary Health Committee and Ministry of Health, conducted an awareness raising seminar on tobacco control in Jordan at the Parliament in Amman on 7 December 2014. Experts from the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean and WHO country office in Turkey participated the event.

His Excellency Minister of Health Dr Ali Hyasat stated in his opening remarks that there needed to be a unified stand from all groups of the society to combat smoking through raising awareness among community members about the harmful effects of tobacco use. He also stressed the need to respect the law in public places and non-smokers' right to breathclean air.

Dr Ra'ad Hijazeen, Head of the Parliamentary Health Committee praised the initiative, which focuses on protecting present and future generations from the devastating health effects of smoking.

Dr Profili, World Health Organization Representative to Jordan stressed the fact that globally tobacco is the leading cause of preventable deaths and kills nearly 6 million people every year. "We know what works to curb that tobacco epidemic. The actions needed by countries are spelled out in the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC). The Jordan Parliament was one of the first to ratify the Convention already in 2004," Dr Profili said.

Dr Profili also added that World Health Organization would like to ensure continued support to the national efforts to protect the Jordanian population against tobacco use and to reduce the exposure to second-hand smoke and to encourage and helping smokers to quit smoking.

Dr Fatimah El Awa, Tobacco Free Initiative Regional Advisor at the WHO Regional Office, said that WHO works with the governments and civil society to support countries to fulfil obligations in the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control by implementing the six most effective MPOWER tobacco control policies measures, which are: Monitor tobacco use and prevention policies. Protect people from tobacco smoke, Offer help to quit tobacco use, Warn about the dangers of tobacco, Enforce bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship and Raise taxes on tobacco.

The Turkish successful experience in Tobacco Control programme “Change Over Time” was shared by Dr Toker Ergüder, Technical Advisor Tobacco Control in WHO Country Office to Turkey.

Dr Ergüder emphasized the key milestones of the Turkey experience, starting with the first tobacco control law in 1996 which had limited effects, the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control was ratified in 2004 same year of Jordan. The revision of the tobacco control law in May 2008 started to be implemented in public workplaces and by July 2009, 100% smoke free law was implemented in country including the hospitality sectors. In May 2010 health warnings were implemented on cigarettes packages, and in October 2010 smoking cessation service launched with 171 quit-lines and free distribution of medications. In October 2011 excise taxes on tobacco products were increased to 80.5%. In July 2012 total ban on advertisement (including brand sharing and brand stretching) and increase pictorial health warnings to at least 65% on both sides of cigarette packages. In June 2013 with further increase of excise taxes tobacco products (81.65% of tax) Turkey become the first and the only country in the world to attain the highest implementation score for all of WHO’s FCTC and MPOWER measures. In November 2014, a protocol to Eliminate Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products’ signed by Council of Ministers was sent Parliament for ratification and pictorial health warnings was implemented on water pipe bottles. In January 2015, a new National Tobacco Control Programme and Plan of Action will be launched.

Dr Ergüder stressed the fact that all these achievements are results of the political commitment and multi-sectorial government approach, and the solid partnerships and shared lessons learned.

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