



12 October 2022, Cairo – Vaping is a gateway to smoking. Data show that people who vape are five times more likely to become regular cigarette smokers, a habit that claims a life every four seconds.

The tobacco industry is using new strategies to fuel its multi-billion-dollar turnover. It is flooding markets around the world with new and emerging nicotine and tobacco products which it sells as “smoke free”, “less harmful”, “cleaner” and “safer” than their conventional counterparts, and claims can be used as effective cessation aids.

A side event — Report on the most recent data on emerging tobacco and nicotine products — held during the 69th session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean offered an opportunity for countries of the Region to identify and agree on ways to regulate these products, based on international best practices and the recommendations of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC).

While the industry is using the concepts of “harm reduction” and “healthier alternatives to smoking” to justify unregulated entry of these new and emerging nicotine and tobacco products into national markets, the truth is these products typically contain nicotine and other toxic substances that can have harmful impacts on brain development and long-term consequences, particularly for children and adolescents.

## **Flooding the Region**

These new products mimic the use of conventional cigarettes, reinforcing a behavioural pattern that can prevent those trying to quit tobacco from doing so successfully. They can even contribute to non-smokers, particularly children and adolescents, taking up conventional

cigarettes.

In the Eastern Mediterranean Region, only one country is set to achieve the target of a 30% relative reduction in tobacco use by 2025. Other countries will only achieve a slight reduction, or may even see an increase in tobacco use, especially when new and emerging nicotine and tobacco products are flooding the Region.

In the face of increasing pressure from the industry to allow such products unregulated entry to markets, it is vital to scale up tobacco control efforts, especially when faced with the fact that vaping has reached more than 15% of young people in some countries of the Region.

Countries need to consider applying regulatory measures, based on international best practices and the recommendations of the COP to the WHO FCTC, prohibiting or restricting the manufacture, import, distribution, presentation, sale and use of new and emerging nicotine and tobacco products.

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