

10 June 2015, Cairo, Egypt -- World Blood Donor Day, celebrated on 14 June, is an occasion to raise awareness of the need for regular blood donations to ensure quality, safety and availability of blood and blood products for patients in need.

Under the slogan “Give freely, give often. Blood donation matters”, World Blood Donor Day this year focuses on thanking blood donors who save lives every day through their blood donations and encourages more people all over the world to donate blood voluntarily and regularly. The theme emphasizes the critical role that voluntary non-remunerated blood donors play in supporting government efforts to ensure availability of safe blood for patients in need.

On the occasion of World Blood Donor Day, Dr Ala Alwan, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, highlights the fact that transfusion of blood and blood products helps save millions of lives every year. It can help patients with life-threatening conditions to live longer and with higher quality of life, and it supports complex medical and surgical procedures. It also has an essential, life-saving role in maternal and child care and during man-made and natural disasters.

He urges all countries to continue to work hard to achieve 100% voluntary donation in the Region.

Acknowledging the vital role of blood donors, Dr Alwan expressed his wish to thank all blood donors for their generosity and particularly the youth for their commitment and support to regional and global efforts to make safe blood available in order to save as many lives as possible.

The role of donors is increasingly vital as, in many countries, demand exceeds supply, and blood services face the challenge of making sufficient blood available while also ensuring its quality and safety. In 2012, around 4.2 million blood donations were collected from all types of blood donors in 11 countries of the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region. In those same countries, approximately 6 million units of blood and blood products were transfused.

“Today, in just 62 countries, national blood supplies are based on or close to 100% voluntary

unpaid blood donations, with 40 countries still dependent on family donors and even paid donors”, Dr Alwan said. “In the Eastern Mediterranean Region, the overall percentage of voluntary blood donations in 2012 was 64%. Based on available data, only two countries have achieved or are very close to achieving a blood supply that comes from 100% voluntary non-remunerated blood donations. At the same time, we still have three countries that collect less than 25% of their blood supplies from voluntary unpaid blood donors”.

WHO has set a goal for all countries to obtain all their blood supplies from voluntary unpaid donors by 2020. In order to achieve that goal and ensure a sustainable and safe blood supply, there is a need to recruit and retain as many young blood donors as possible.

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