

30 May 2012, Cairo, Egypt – On the eve of celebrating world No Tobacco Day 2012, WHO urges countries across the Eastern Mediterranean Region to adopt and implement strict tobacco control laws and measures to resist tobacco industry interference in tobacco control policies. The tobacco industry is unrelenting in its efforts to counter and undermine tobacco control initiatives and activities.

This year WHO has selected "tobacco industry interference" as the theme of World No Tobacco Day, which will be observed on Thursday, 31 May 2012. This year's campaign will focus on the need to expose and counter the tobacco industry's brazen and increasingly aggressive attempts to undermine the tobacco control measures defined in the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

"Issuing laws and adopting appropriate measures to ban tobacco advertising, increase taxes on tobacco products, place pictorial health warnings on tobacco packs and ban smoking in public places are the only ways to counter the tobacco epidemic", says WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean, Dr Ala Alwan. "It is the only way to fight an epidemic deadlier than history's most destructive wars".

Tobacco use kills nearly 6 million people every year, 600 000 of whom were exposed to second-hand smoke. If current trends continue, tobacco use will kill nearly 8 million people every year throughout the period leading to 2030. More than 80% of those deaths will be in low-income and middle-income countries, which include most countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

"Deaths and illnesses caused by tobacco use and exposure to its smoke can be prevented", explains Dr Alwan. "The guidelines for implementation of Article 5.3 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control are the platform, and include a set of clearly defined recommendations for addressing tobacco industry interference in public health policies".

The tobacco industry continues to alter its tactics and plans to set back tobacco control measures. Its tactics and plans include: influencing decision-makers; undermining laws to increase tobacco taxes; opposing smoking bans in public places; fighting health warnings on tobacco packs; supporting smuggling activities; manipulating and pressuring the media; undermining tobacco advertising bans; promoting tobacco use to youth; questioning religious

edicts prohibiting tobacco use; and warning about unemployment and economic stagnation.

“Countries, governments, decision-makers and civil society must continue to counter tobacco industry tactics and plans on all fronts,” says Dr Alwan. “It is the only way to reduce the toll of preventable disease and death caused by tobacco use”.

More information:

[Tobacco Free Initiative](#)

[WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control \(FCTC\)](#)

[Guidelines for implementation of Article 5.3 of the WHO FCTC](#)

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