Dr Asmus Hammerich, Director of Noncommunicable Diseases and Mental Health, Dr Rana Hajjah, Director of Programme Management, Dr Hani Al Gouhmani, World No Tobacco Day award winner, and Dr Fatimah El-Awa, Regional Adviser for the Tobacco Free Iniative in the WHO Regional Office

23 August 2023, Cairo, Egypt – Every year, the WHO Regional Office recognizes individuals for their accomplishments in the area of tobacco control. Today, the World No Tobacco Day award was presented to Dr Hani Al Gouhmani, former coordinator of the Framework Convention Alliance for supporting nongovernmental organizations in tobacco control in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, and for his tireless efforts with civil society associations that advocate for tobacco control.

Tobacco kills more than 8 million people every year, including 1.3 million non-smokers who are exposed to second-hand smoke. Around 80% of the world's 1.3 billion tobacco users live in low- and middle-income countries.

Data from the latest “WHO report on the global tobacco epidemic” indicate that while progress has been steady since 2007, the pace has slowed down since 2018.

The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control – the first international treaty negotiated under the auspices of WHO – was adopted by the WHO Member States in 2003 to address the tobacco epidemic and entered into force in 2005. Currently, 182 countries are Parties to this Treaty.

In line with the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, WHO introduced the MPOWER measures. Implementation of the 6 MPOWER strategies have saved lives and reduced costs from averted health care expenditure. Over 70% of the world's population, or 5.6 billion people, are now protected by at least one MPOWER measure – 5 times more than in 2007. However, although the number of countries with 2 or more MPOWER measures in place has increased almost tenfold since 2007, many countries in the Region still lack effective legislation and implementation of these measures.

During a ceremony held at the Regional Office in Cairo to present the award, Dr Rana Hajjeh, Director of Programme Management, expressed her great appreciation of the work of Dr Hany Al Gouhmani. "We are delighted to present the award to Dr Al Gouhmani in acknowledgement of his continuing endeavours to promote tobacco control across the Region, and we urge all sectors to coordinate efforts in spearheading tobacco control efforts to reduce the prevalence of tobacco use."

"I am honoured to receive this WHO award. Such recognition is a driving force not only for me but for all tobacco control advocates in the Region and beyond who continue the battle against tobacco – deadly in any form or disguised," Dr Al Gouhmani said.

Dr Al Gouhmani continues to work in the field of tobacco control at international level and supports civil society associations in this field.

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