



**REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE
EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN**

August 2017

**Sixty-fourth Session
Islamabad, Pakistan, 9–12 October 2017**

**FULL IMPLEMENTATION OF THE WHO FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON
TOBACCO CONTROL (WHO FCTC): SAVE LIVES**

Objectives of the event

The objectives are to:

- highlight the magnitude of the problem of tobacco use in WHO's Eastern Mediterranean Region and in comparison with other WHO regions;
- propose actions to address the problem of tobacco use and discuss the possibility of launching the ACT NOW initiative;
- highlight recommended elements for success in tobacco control.

Background

Tobacco use is the leading preventable cause of death. Each year, tobacco use kills more than 7 million people; nearly 80% of these deaths occur in low- and middle-income countries. Since entry into force of the WHO FCTC, State Parties have attempted to achieve the highest level of implementation of recommended tobacco control measures, including those policies reflected in the MPOWER package launched in 2008 by WHO and later identified as noncommunicable disease “best buys”.

However, in recent years and due to political and socioeconomic changes in the Region tobacco control efforts have decreased and have been replaced by other priorities in national health agendas, to the extent that more than 70% of Member States in the Region are not identified as being the highest achieving in implementing tobacco control policies. As a result, the number of smokers is increasing among all age groups, especially children and youth. New trends in tobacco use are being introduced without much control from concerned authorities, the implementation of tobacco control legislation is becoming weaker and the tobacco industry is gaining ground in influencing tobacco control actions at national level.

If current trends continue the Region will not be able to achieve the agreed upon target for 2025 of a 30% reduction in tobacco use. It is expected that prevalence rates will increase and will compromise achievement of the global Sustainable Development Goal target for tobacco control by 2030.

To respond to this growing tobacco epidemic in the Region and the increasing influence of the tobacco industry, a new project entitled “Action Needed Now in Tobacco Control” (the ACT Now Initiative), has been developed by the WHO Regional Office which will focus on policies that work and promote engagement with other United Nations agencies and partners.

Way forward

One of the key factors in moving forward the tobacco control agenda is to elicit the support of high-level decision-makers. This session will provide a unique opportunity to highlight tobacco control and its linkages with the Sustainable Development Goals. The session will bring together three key partners: the WHO Regional Office, secretariat members of the WHO FCTC and representatives of the United Nations Development Programme to present a strong case for tobacco control to Representatives of the Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean.

Expected outcome of the meeting

- Improved understanding of the urgent need to accelerate activities in tobacco control and agreement reached on the need to endorse implementation of the strongest measures for tobacco control (ACT NOW Initiative).