

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Address by

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to the

WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY

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This World No Tobacco Day, I have four questions for all of us:

How is it that the tobacco industry has managed, and continues, to sell a poison that kills nearly 16 000 people a day, nearly 6 million people a year?

How is it that it has managed, and continues, to package death as life, sickness as health?

Simple really! The tobacco industry aims to sell a life style!

Evidence has found that 15% of young people aged 13–15 years in the Region own an object with a tobacco company logo or other cigarette branding, while 9% have been offered free cigarettes by a tobacco company representative.

So, how is it that our countries are not taking the maximum measures to stop this?

For decades, the tobacco industry has, and continues, to use advertising, promotion and sponsorship to glamorize their deadly products. They use the great open spaces, the fresh air, healthy young people, athletic prowess, sexuality, vitality, maturity, imagery that makes it impossible to imagine the disease, disability and premature death that accompanies the product.

The immediate need to ban tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship is thus the focus of this year's World No Tobacco Day, and the core of my message.

For decades, advertising, promotion and sponsorship have been shown to increase the consumption of virtually any product, yet the tobacco industry continues to deny this link! It claims that these activities neither convince smokers to smoke more nor persuade non-smokers to start. It claims promotion merely supports healthy competition and motivates existing smokers to switch brands!

Yet, the tobacco industry continues to fight bans through minimum concessions, half measures, voluntary self-regulation, claims of corporate social responsibility and numerous other innovative ways. They work around legal restrictions to ensure that their visual identity is maintained and adequately communicated.

Despite the effectiveness of comprehensive bans, only 6 out of 23 countries in the Region are fully protected from exposure to the tobacco industry advertising, promotion and sponsorship tactics.

Evidence shows that comprehensive bans help reduce tobacco use and counter:

- the deceptive and misleading nature of tobacco marketing campaigns;
- the unavoidable exposure of youth to tobacco marketing;
- the failure of the tobacco industry to effectively self-regulate; and
- the ineffectiveness of partial bans.

Why is it then that only 6% of the world's population is fully protected from exposure to tobacco industry advertising, promotion and sponsorship tactics?

Because the fact still remains: tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship are critical to the industry's continued physical and political expansion.

You take away their tools, you take away their visibility, impact their business, and sever their leverage.

And that's why as more and more countries move to fully meet their obligations under the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, you find the tobacco industry's attempts to undermine the treaty becoming more and more pronounced.

Unless we act, the tobacco epidemic will kill more than 8 million people every year by 2030. More than 80% of these preventable deaths will be among people living in low- and middle-income countries.

As tobacco use decreases in many countries, partly due to restrictions on tobacco marketing and use, the tobacco industry is switching its efforts to the developing world where there are large and growing markets and fewer restrictions on tobacco marketing. In particular, as potential customers, young people and women present a major marketing opportunity for the tobacco industry.

On the occasion of World No Tobacco Day, I call upon governments, parliamentarians, and local, national and international partners to:

1. implement Article 13 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and its guidelines to comprehensively ban tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship;
2. counter the tobacco industry's efforts to undermine tobacco control, specifically its efforts to stall or stop comprehensive bans on tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship; and
3. take the maximum measures possible to control direct and indirect advertising.

Don't go half way and stop, go all the way.

So that less people start and continue to use tobacco.