



*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

**Message from**

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**REGIONAL DIRECTOR**

**WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

**to the**

**WORLD BLOOD DONOR DAY**

**14 June 2013**

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests, Dear Colleagues,

On 14 June 2013, the world celebrates World Blood Donor Day which is marked with events around the world to raise awareness of the need for safe blood and blood products and to thank all voluntary unpaid donors for their life-saving gift of blood.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The transfusion of blood and blood products helps save millions of lives every year. It can help improve life expectancy and the quality of life for patients suffering from life-threatening conditions. For example, blood may be needed to support a mother and her child during a complex birth, or to support a patient during surgery. In many countries, demand outstrips supply, and blood services face the challenge of making sufficient blood available for all, while also ensuring its quality and safety. Today, in 62 countries, national blood supplies are based on 100% voluntary unpaid blood donation. However, 40 countries still depend on family donors, and even paid donors, and collect less than 25% of their blood supplies from voluntary unpaid blood donors.

Unfortunately, in our region, only two countries have declared 100% non-remunerated voluntary blood donation, in spite of all efforts to increase this proportion, and in spite of continued advocacy for voluntary non-remunerated blood donation. The other countries of the Region still depend mainly on family or replacement donation. The goal of the World

Health Organization is for all countries to obtain their blood supplies entirely from voluntary unpaid donors by 2020.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This day was established as an annual event by the World Health Assembly in 2004. The observance of the day is an activity organized by WHO in collaboration with key international organizations, including the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Federation of Blood Donor Organizations, the International Society of Blood Transfusion and the American Association of Blood Banks. The day is intended for Member States, organizations of the United Nations system, multilateral and bilateral agencies, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations and bodies concerned with global blood safety to come together in promoting and supporting voluntary non-remunerated blood donation as the foundation for safe and sufficient supplies of blood and blood products. It has become an integral part of national blood donor programmes and an occasion to thank, appreciate and acknowledge voluntary blood donors, as well as nongovernmental organizations who strive to advocate for voluntary non-remunerated blood donation among both youth and adults.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The 2013 World Blood Donor Day marks the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this WHO celebration. The campaign this year focuses on the theme “Give the gift of life: donate blood”. Blood donation both saves lives and fulfils lives. In a blood bag there is more than just blood: there is life and generosity.

While recognizing the silent and unsung heroes who save lives every day through their blood donations, the theme also strongly encourages more people all over the world to donate blood voluntarily and regularly. The 2013 theme also resonates widely in relation to other community champions, such as fire fighters, police, rescue workers, civic leaders and workers for social causes and community improvement.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With your continued support and the interest of other partners in the global community, World Blood Donor Day will be an inspiring act of global solidarity, not only to thank those

individuals who give the gift of blood, but also to encourage wider efforts to achieve universal access to safe blood transfusion.

I hope that you have made the gesture of donating blood today.

Thank you for being with us on a day of giving.

God bless you all.