



In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Address by

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WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

to the

WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY

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Every year, on the occasion of World No Tobacco Day, WHO sheds light on a different aspect of the tobacco epidemic. This year, however, we look at the crux of this epidemic: the tobacco industry... an industry that manufactures the only product in the world that kills half of its regular users.

The tobacco industry is unrelenting in its attempts to draw in new customers, grow its profits and undermine tobacco control efforts. It monitors our activities and efforts so that it can interfere wherever and whenever possible.

When we push for higher taxes, they warn of increased smuggling.

When we call for smoke-free policies, they propose designating smoking areas.

When we pursue health warnings, they lobby decision-makers.

When we call for comprehensive advertising bans, they manipulate the media.

When we push for banning tobacco agriculture, they warn about unemployment.

And, when we quote them from their own internal documents, they claim they have relented!

The truth is – for the tobacco industry to relent, it has to forfeit its business; a business that sells 6 trillion cigarettes every year, with profits reaching US\$ 614 billion in 2009.

In other words, the tobacco industry will continue to grow its business and its customer base, knowing full well that its business can only grow by addicting new young customers, to replace adult quitters or those who have died.

We now know beyond a doubt that tobacco use is an addiction that causes disease and death. Six million people die from tobacco use and exposure each year. It is a central risk factor in the noncommunicable diseases burden. Tobacco use causes heart disease, cancers, chronic lung diseases and other noncommunicable conditions, which are the leading cause of preventable morbidity and disability. Noncommunicable diseases currently cause 60% of global deaths, 80% of which occur in developing countries.

Tobacco use must therefore be controlled and prevented.

Our platform is none other than the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and its guidelines for implementation of Article 5.3 on the protection of public health policy from the interests of the tobacco industry.

Strict laws and measures are the only way to address tobacco industry interference in public health policies and offset an epidemic that is “deadlier than history’s most destructive wars”.

CONTROL tobacco... **REDUCE** the risk of disabling and lethal diseases...
INCREASE the quality of life of peoples around the world.