

Message from

Dr Hanan Balkhy

WHO Regional Director for
the Eastern Mediterranean
on the occasion of

World No Tobacco Day

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This year's World No Tobacco Day campaign shines a light on a hard truth: the tobacco and nicotine industry is constantly reinventing itself—repackaging harm to hook a new generation, particularly children and adolescents, while sidestepping stronger regulation.

As a paediatrician and a mother, I find this deeply concerning. These products are designed to create addiction early, targeting young people at a stage of life when their bodies and brains are still developing.

Despite decades of progress, tobacco and nicotine products continue to cause millions of preventable deaths each year.

In the Eastern Mediterranean Region an estimated 5.5 million children aged 13 to 15 are already using tobacco. Adolescents are far more likely than adults to use e-cigarettes, with rates among young people—especially boys—reaching alarming levels in some areas. Across many countries, more than half of young people report exposure to tobacco advertising and promotion.

This is not accidental. It is the result of deliberate strategies—flavours that mask harshness, packaging that attracts, and digital marketing that normalizes use. Combined with weak regulation, enforcement gaps and persistent industry interference, these tactics are driving a growing and evolving epidemic.

In a Region where a large share of the population is under 30, the stakes could not be higher. Without decisive action, we risk locking a new generation into lifelong addiction.

We must act immediately to ban flavours that target youth, to regulate product design, and to mandate clear graphic health warnings and adopt plain packaging. We must enforce comprehensive bans on advertising, promotion and sponsorship—including across digital platforms.

We must protect people from second-hand smoke, strengthen cessation services, and increase taxes to reduce affordability. Together, we must unmask the appeal, counter these tactics and act now to safeguard health across the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

No industry should be allowed to profit from nicotine and tobacco addiction at the expense of future generations.