

**TOBACCO = CANCER  
WHY TAKE THE RISK?  
PRESS CONFERENCE, CAIRO, EGYPT, 25 OCTOBER 2009**

**Meeting with the Regional Director**

On Sunday, 25 October 2009, Dr Hussein A. Gezairy, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean met with Ambassador Nancy Brinker, WHO Global Goodwill Ambassador for Cancer Control at the Regional Office premises in Cairo, Egypt. This short orientation session was held at 12:30 pm at the Regional Director's office where Dr Gezairy gave Ambassador Brinker a briefing on the Region.



**Background**

Proceeding this meeting, the Tobacco Free Initiative, Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean held its first-time event on the link between tobacco use and cancer. This event was held in the Kuwait Conference Hall at the Regional Office premises at 1:00 pm.



This 1-hour event discussed the high prevalence of tobacco use and the negative health effects associated with it, in particular cancer.

The Keynote Speaker for this event was Ambassador Nancy Brinker, who is known around the world for the work that has defined her life for nearly 30 years, when her sister, Susan G. Komen, died of breast cancer at the age of 36.

Two years later, Ambassador Brinker founded the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation for the Cure with the mission of ending breast cancer forever.



This event was attended by UN Agencies, dignitaries, celebrities (UNICEF and UNDP Goodwill Ambassadors), nongovernmental organizations, medical and academic institutions, tobacco control advocates and media personnel.



Dr Hussein A. Gezairy delivered his address in the opening ceremony which focused on the:

- tobacco and cancer situation in the Region;
- successes and challenges facing advocates in those two areas; and
- importance of implementing the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.



Ambassador Brinker then delivered her speech on the:

- global war against tobacco and cancer;
- importance of prioritizing both areas of work;
- belief that norms and culture can be changed; and
- importance of hard work, determination and a holistic approach in fighting those two global killers.

### Awardees

Twelve personalities and organizations were recognized by Dr Gezairy and Ambassador Brinker for their outstanding achievements in preventing cancer and controlling tobacco use, particularly through the strong implementation of tobacco control legislation. The awardees included:



1. Dr Hamdi El Sayed – Head of Egyptian Medical Syndicate and Chairman of the Health Committee in the Egyptian parliament.
2. Dr Sherif Omar –Member of the Egyptian Parliament and Professor of Surgical Oncology, National Cancer Institute, Cairo University.
3. Dr Madiha Khattab – Former Dean, Faculty of Medicine, Cairo University.
4. Dr Mohamed Shaalan – Head of the Tobacco Control File in the Health Committee of Egypt's National Democratic Party.
5. Dr Ahmad Hamed Atteya – Head, Central Association Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease, Egypt.







6. Dr Mustapha Kamal – Founder, Egyptian Smoking Prevention and Research Institute.

7. Mr Mohammad El Sawy – Founder, El Sawy Cultural Center and Creator of the “White Circle” smoke-free campaign, Egypt.

8. The 57357 Children’s Cancer Hospital, Egypt.



9. Ms Samira Ali Higo – Tobacco Control Focal Point, Djibouti.

10. Dr Hiba Ayub – Tobacco Control Focal Point, Jordan.

11. Dr Mounira Nebli – Tobacco Control Focal Point, Tunisia.

12. Dr Khalid El Shehhi – Health Adviser, Embassy of the United Arab Emirates.



### Call for Action

The final highlight of the event was the Regional Call for Action where Dr Gezairy and Ambassador Brinker called upon all Member States within the Eastern Mediterranean Region to implement the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control – the first international public health Treaty and the most widely ratified instrument garnering more than 160 Parties worldwide. The Framework Convention is an evidence-based Treaty paving the way for strong cancer prevention.



### **Release of documents**

Two documents were released during this event as follows: a complete folder on the cancer and tobacco health tolls and the high prevalence of tobacco use among young people and adults; and the health benefits associated with smoking cessation and recommended quit tips.

### **Media coverage**

Over the one-week time span following the event, the national and regional print and broadcast media listed hereafter published articles/stories on the event:

**Newspapers:** Al Akhbar, Al Akhbar Al Masa'eya, Al Gomhureya, Watani, Akidaty, Al Bayan Al Emarateya, Al Khaleej and Al Shouk.

**Television:** Egyptian terrestrial and satellite TV channel 1 (during the 9:00 pm news and the show titled 'The past 24 hours'), BBC (Arabic), OTV, Nile Life, Orbit and Dubai TV.