



**REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE FRAMEWORK CONVENTION ON
TOBACCO CONTROL
CAIRO, EGYPT, 12–15 DECEMBER 2011**

HIGHLIGHTS

This workshop was held jointly with the Secretariat of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) and the WHO Regional Office. This workshop was an opportunity for regional Parties to the FCTC, the Convention Secretariat and WHO to discuss jointly the ongoing developments in the work of the treaty and progress in its implementation at national level.

This is the first meeting of regional Parties since the fourth session of the Conference of Parties was held in Uruguay last year. Many important outcomes were seen during that session, with the adoption of guidelines for four Articles, and decisions to enhance international cooperation to implement the Convention. This workshop was an opportunity to discuss how Parties should move ahead in implementing these guidelines and make use of mechanisms for international cooperation in tobacco control.

Over the past year, many important developments were seen at regional level. Progress in tobacco control legislation has been made in Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Pakistan, Syrian Arab Republic and United Arab Emirates, focusing on demand-side measures of the FCTC. Egypt has increased taxes on tobacco products. Countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council are in the process of adopting unified pictorial health warnings as stipulated by FCTC guidelines. These developments came in light of earlier guidelines for Articles 5.3, 8, 11 and 13 of the FCTC. Regional Parties are encouraged to take steps to include in their national agendas implementation of the newly adopted guidelines.

The nearer the Region moves towards FCTC implementation, the more active the resistance by the tobacco industry becomes. The tobacco industry is continuing to undermine this treaty by introducing new fashions in tobacco use and by high-level lobbying to circumvent the laws.

The fight against the tobacco industry is becoming stronger and stronger. The only effective way to deter the involvement of the tobacco industry is by ensuring implementation of Article 5.3 guidelines, ensuring effective implementation of national tobacco control laws and supporting the 2012 World No Tobacco Day aiming to tackle tobacco industry interference in tobacco control policies.

The Eastern Mediterranean Region has 19 Member States that are Party to the Framework Convention, leaving just three countries that are not. The Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean is hopeful that soon these countries will also be on board. However, the Parties need to accelerate development of stronger legislation and implementation of the treaty obligations. Implementation in the area of smoke-free policies, health warnings and taxation policies was seen; still countries are far from their goals. The Region has high prevalence of tobacco use among both adults and youth. In order to reverse these trends, sincere and conscious efforts by the Parties at their end are needed. With the FCTC, there is international commitment from the Parties, and there is support from the Tobacco Free Initiative and the Convention Secretariat. The Parties also have identified mechanisms for international cooperation and financial assistance.

As much as the Region moves ahead to clarify the details of the Convention, it becomes increasingly apparent the extreme importance of political, technical and intersectoral commitment needed at national level to implement the FCTC in its true spirit. The role of national ambassadors and focal points becomes extremely important in devising national strategies to ensure that happens. Without such support and indulgence, the decisions adopted by the Parties will fail to show their worth.