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Welcome note

Waterpipe tobacco smoking regulatory challenges

Beirut, 6-7 November 2018

Dr Iman Shankiti, WHO representative in Lebanon, Mr Fadi Snan, FCTC focal point of the Ministry of Health of Lebanon, Dr Ghazi Zaatari director of the WHO FCTC Secretariat's Knowledge Hub on Waterpipe Tobacco Smoking, government representatives, civil society colleagues, representatives of the WHO FCTC Secretariat's Knowledge Hubs, dear organizers, colleagues.

On behalf of the Secretariat of the WHO FCTC, I would like to welcome you all to this meeting organized by the Knowledge Hub on waterpipes, whose work focuses on regulatory challenges on waterpipe tobacco smoking. I see this conference as the continuation of our exchange started at the "Third International Conference on Waterpipe Tobacco Smoking Research: Translating waterpipe tobacco smoking research evidence into practice, policy and regulation", which took place one year ago here, at AUB.

At that conference, experts concluded that there is need to translate the evidence already collected on waterpipe tobacco smoking into policies, regulations and interventions. The conference also identified priority areas for waterpipe policies and regulations, including a ban of flavors, the implementation of pictorial health warnings on all waterpipe parts and products, the application of tax and price measures, the implementation of clean indoor air policies and the enforcement of age restrictions in waterpipe serving establishments, as well as the prohibition of any waterpipe related online marketing efforts.

It should be ensured that all policy measures required under the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC) are also applied to waterpipe tobacco smoking and products. As part of these efforts, research is needed to further tailor existing evidence-based tobacco control measures to waterpipe tobacco smoking and to address potential barriers to effective implementation.

The WHO FCTC Secretariat's Knowledge Hub on Waterpipe Tobacco Smoking hosted by AUB can provide leadership and coordination to keep the momentum going for waterpipe control in the region and globally by continuously collecting, synthesizing, and disseminating evidence to guide waterpipe policy, regulation, and interventions. It can also provide tailored support for parties that wish to progress on implementing waterpipe control legislation.

But all this is easier said than done. Challenges in adopting and implementing policies and regulations are multiple, and this without even talking about the interference from the tobacco industry. This meeting will provide a platform to discussing these challenges and will hopefully offer mechanisms to overcome or address such challenges.

I therefore wish you fruitful deliberations and hope that the outcome of this meeting will help designing and implementing more effective waterpipe control policies and programmes.