

Syrian Arab Republic

Ministry of Health

No. 506/14/8

To: Resident Representative  
World Health Organization

Through: International Health Department

Dear Sir,

The following are activities of Tobacco Control Programme for 2008 in line with the articles, paragraphs and items of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control which was ratified by the Syrian Arab Republic via Legislative Decree No. 59 on 6 July 2004.

**First: Enforcement of Article (5), related to General Obligations:**

- National Committee on Tobacco Control meeting was held to discuss projects proposed for the Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Smoking, Damascus.
- Training course held on “Enforcement of Tobacco Control Convention”, Ruqqah.
- Workshop, conducted within the project for Development of Health Sector (funded by European Union), entitled “Implementation Status of WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control: Tobacco Control Programme Coordinators in the Governorates” Hama.
- Workshop conducted within the project for Development of Health Sector (funded by European Union), entitled “Implementation Status of WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control: Bodies Serving as Members of the National Committee on Tobacco Control: People’s Organizations, Vocational Associations, NGO’s, Private Sector”, Daraa.
- Workshop organized within the project for Development of Health Sector (funded by European Union), entitled “Implementation Status of WHO Framework

Convention on Tobacco Control: Bodies Serving as Members of the National Committee on Tobacco Control: Government Bodies”, Tartus.

- Preparation of Projects for Executive Instructions for Tobacco Control Draft Legislation (Draft Project 32).
- Endorsement of Tobacco Control Legislation by the Council of Ministers and forwarding of the Legislation to higher levels.

**Second: Enforcement of Article (8), related to Protection from Exposure to Tobacco Smoke:**

- Legislative text banning smoking on means of public transportation: Legislative Decree (11) of 30/1/2008, revising the Traffic and Vehicles Legislation (31) of 11/7/2004. Paragraph (8) of item Second, Article (99) of said Decree reads “Individuals committing the offence of smoking on a means of public transportation shall be penalized with a 2000 Syrian Lyra fine, together with removal of causes of the offence with the deduction of two points”. Paragraphs, a, b, c and d of Article 201 elaborates on actions taken to handle the offence.
- Statement No. 5/B/1190/15 dated 25/2/2008, issued by the Cabinet’s Bureau banned smoking of all kinds of tobacco at premises of ministries, organizations and public institutions. It also imposed fines to offenders as indicated in paragraph (a) of Article (68) and paragraph (a) of Article (70) of Civil Servants Statute, issued by law (50) for 2004.
- Ministry of Health Circular No. 6679/14/8 on 6/4/2008 reinforced the contents of Cabinet Statement No. 25/B/6326/15 dated 25/2/2008 which bans smoking of all kinds of tobacco at premises of ministries, organizations and public institutions and underlines the importance of strictly implementing MOH Circular No.11910/8/2/3/21, dated 1/7/2007 which banned smoking at all MOH premises as well as premises of health directorates at the various governorates.
- Decision No. 1833, dated 10/11/2008, from Minister of Culture ordains:
  - Ban of smoking and sales of tobacco products at cultural centres, cinemas, theatres, public librarians, museums, cultural

- institutions and any other settings affiliating with the Ministry. The decision further bans actual smoking of actors while playing their roles on the stage.
- Execution of rulings and enforcement of applicable laws against offenders and violators.
  - Circular No. 18/T, dated 4/2/2008 of Revolution Youth Union affirmed smoking ban at congregation settings and premises of the Union, as well as at Union meetings and group activity settings (seminars, courses, lectures, gatherings, etc). The circular further reiterated the importance of holding symposia, meetings and presentations, promoting smoking control in view of its negative impact on individual and community health.
  - Statement of the General Farmers Union issued under No, 55/T, dated 20/4/2008, ordained ban of smoking at all buildings of the Union.
  - Workshop held within the project for Development of Health Sector (funded by the European Union) entitled “Furtherance of Legislation Enforcement on Smoking Ban at Public Settings, Public Transport and Prohibition of Sales Targeting Minors”, Homs.
  - Seminar entitled “Smoking-free Kalamoon University”, organized by Kalamoon University for one day, Damascus.
  - Seminar on “Sahal, A Tobacco-free village”, Sahal (Rural Damascus).
  - Seminar on “Ahmadeya, A Tobacco-free village”, Ahmadeya, (Rural Damascus).
  - Two presentations on “The Tobacco-free Healthy Village of Ahmadeya”, Ahmadeya (Rural Damascus).
  - Meeting with Minister of Tourism to discuss the issue of banning smoking at restaurants, coffee shops and hotels.

**Third: Enforcement of Article (9), related to Regulation of Contents of Tobacco Products:**

- Minister of Industry's Decision No. 259; dated 29/8/2007, approving adoption of the Syrian Standard Specification No. 3329 for "Chemical Estimation of Nicotine in Tobacco and Tobacco Products".
- Minister of Industry's Decision No. 260, dated 29/8/2007 approving adoption of the Syrian Standard Specification No. 3330 for "Determining Malieic Hydrazide in Tobacco Products".
- Minister of Industry's Decision No. 261, dated 29/8/2007 approving adoption of Syrian Standard Specifications No. 3331 for "Determining Alcaloids Contents in Tobacco and Tobacco Products by Spectrophotometer".
- Minister of Industry's Decision No. 262, dated 29/8/2007 approving adoption of the Syrian Standard Specification No 3332 for "Determining Residuals of Silica Insoluble in Hydrochloride Acid".
- Minister of Industry's Decision No. 188, dated 9/9/2003 approving adoption of Syrian Standard Specifications No. 2795 for "Cigarette Leaves for Automatic Wrapping – Requirements and Testing".
- Minister of Industry's Decision No. 511 dated 31/12/2007 approving adoption of Syrian Standard Specification No. 3359 for "Determining Carbon Monoxide in Cigarettes in Smoke Fume Phase – the Non-Dispersive Infra Red Method".

**Fourth: Enforcement of Article (12), related to Education, Communication, Training and Public Awareness:**

- Participated in the Regional Training Course on Communication and Advocacy of Tobacco Control, Cairo.
- Celebrated the World Tobacco Control Day in Damascus under the slogan of "Youth Will Not Be Smoking", in collaboration with the Revolution Youth Union, UNICEF and WHO. The celebration comprised a seminar, an art contest (cartoon drawings, posters, photography and article writing) and an exhibit for all art works in the contest. Twenty three appreciation letters were awarded to those who exerted distinguished efforts in the area of

tobacco control and to winners of the art contest. Also, a fact sheet, as well as, an informational newsletter were published, together with organization of a Tobacco Control Week in all Governorates.

- Celebrated the Syrian Day and the Arab Day for Tobacco Control in Swaida, under the slogan of “Let Us Work Together to Reject the Social Acceptance of Use of Tobacco Products”, in collaboration with WHO. The celebration comprised a seminar and an art contest (cartoon drawing and photography) with an exhibit for all works of the contest. Twenty Four appreciation letters were awarded to those who exerted distinguished efforts in the area of smoking control. A Tobacco Control week was organized in all Syrian governorates.
- Participated in the celebration held in Alippo on the occasion of World Tobacco Free Day.
- Participated in a seminar on “Cancer and Chronic Lung Disease – Evidenced Based Foundations for Smoking Harms” organized by the Subsidiary Committee on Smoking Control in Homs.
- Participated in a seminar on “Smoking ..... Until When” organized by the Greek Orthodox Church of Antioch and All the East, Damascus.
- Participated in a seminar on “Towards a Smoke-free Environment” organized by the Development and Advancement Society in collaboration with the Syrian Society for Control of Smoking and Harmful Substances to Health”, Rural Damascus, Al-Tall.
- Participated in the Socio-Scientific Day, under the slogan of “A culture of Volunteerism: Hand in Hand for a smoke-free Environment”, organized by the College of Pharmacy and the Syrian Society for Control of Smoking and Harmful Substances to Health”, Damascus.
- Produced a cartoon spot entitled “Slogan of the World Tobacco-Free Day”.
- Produced a poster on the occasion of the World Tobacco-free Day.
- Reprinted the brochure on “Water Pipe is As Harmful” in celebration of World Tobacco-Free Day.
- Reprinted the brochure on “Smoking Cessation”.

- Published topics related to tobacco control in formal Syrian newspapers, as well as periodicals of People's Organizations and Vocational Associations.
- Disseminated numerous informational messages on the harms of smoking in different means of mass media.
- Held several radio and television seminars on smoking control.

**Fifth: Enforcement of Article (13), related to Tobacco Advertising, Promotion and Sponsorship:**

- Ministry of Interior Circular No. 1742/S, dated 7/11/2007 reiterated full compliance with Legislative Decree (13) for 1996 which confirmed strict repression of store and supermarket owners' practice to promote water-pipe smoking by resorting to free home delivery of water pipes to customers and offering incentives to encourage their use.

**Sixth: Enforcement of Article (14), related to Demand Reduction, Measures Concerning Tobacco Dependence and Cessation.**

- Participated in a scientific presentation on "What is New in Treating Smoking Addictions", organized by Alippo Pharmaceutical Industries Company, Alpha, Damascus.

**Seventh: Enforcement of Article (15), related to Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products.**

- Participated in the first session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body on a Protocol on Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products, Geneva.
- Participated in the second session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body on a Protocol on Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products, Geneva.
- Participated in the preliminary meeting for the first session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body on a Protocol on Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products, Cairo.

- Participated in the preliminary meeting for the second session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body on a Protocol on Illicit Trade in Tobacco Products, Geneva.

**Eighth: Enforcement of Article (16) related to Sales for Minors and Sales by Minors.**

- Ministry of Local Management Decision No. 60/N, dated 30/3/2008 banned sales of tobacco products in all forms by individuals under 19 years, with offenders penalized by confiscating tobacco products in their possession. Confiscated items are sent to the General Tobacco Organization for disposition, as per applicable rules and regulations.
- Workshop organized within the project for Development of Health Sector (funded by European Union), entitled “Furtherance of Legislation Enforcement on Smoking Ban at Public Settings, Public Transport and Prohibition of Sales Targeting Minors”, Homs

**Ninth: Enforcement of Article (17,) related to Provision of Support for Economically Viable Alternative Activities.**

- Participated in the second Meeting of the Study Group on Economically Sustained Tobacco Substitutes, Mexico.

**Tenth: Enforcement of Article (20), related to Research, Surveillance and Exchange of Information.**

- Issued the Syrian Report on the Second Round of The Global Youth Tobacco Survey, in Arabic.

**Eleventh: Enforcement of Article (22), related to Cooperation in the Scientific, Technological and Legal Fields and Provision of Related Expertise.**

- Recruited an expert to provide assistance in preparing proposals for projects presented for Bloomberg Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use, Damascus.

**Twelfth: Enforcement of Article (23), related to Conference of the Parties:**

- Participated in the second session of Conference of the Parties of WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, Durban.

This, in addition to numerous activities carried out by health affairs directorates in the various governorates, in their capacity as members of the National Committee for Tobacco Control.

Kindly review and forward a copy thereof to the Department of 'Tobacco Free Initiative' at the Regional Office.

Thank you for your kind cooperation.

*Damascus on 11/1/2009.*

Dr Mohamed J. El-Owayed

Assistant to Minister of Health

On behalf of Minister of Health