

Press Release

Islamabad, 31-05-2018: Federal Minister for National Health Services Saira Afzal Tarar, said that tobacco use is an important risk factor for the development of coronary heart disease, stroke, and peripheral vascular disease. In Pakistan, tobacco use is a cause of death of around 160,100 persons every year. Almost 23.9 million adults currently use tobacco in any form in the country. She was speaking in the award presentation ceremony held on the occasion of World No Tobacco Day, 2018.

She told that this Ministry had taken numerous measures to curb the use of tobacco in the country. In this regard, enhanced size Pictorial Health Warning (PHW) to be printed on cigarette packs (50% from 1st June, 2018 and 60% from 1st June, 2019) were notified. Moreover, sale of loose (individual) cigarette sticks by retail seller or any individual had been banned. Import of Sheesha (tobacco and non-tobacco) and related substances had also been banned. To reduce exposure to tobacco advertisements, this Ministry banned tobacco and tobacco products advertisements in print, electronic and outdoor media.

The Minister said that awareness measures had been taken to reduce the demand of tobacco products. In this connection, three mass media campaigns with the assistance of Vital Strategies had been implemented. Awareness interventions had also been carried out with the support of PEMRA / Central Film Censor Board.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr. Mohammad Assai, Head of WHO Office Pakistan appreciated the Tobacco Control Cell of the Ministry on taking very important measures to reduce prevalence of tobacco use in the country. He emphasized on the "Best Buys" for an effective tobacco control in Pakistan. These he said are: Increase excise taxes and prices on tobacco products; Implement plain/standardized packaging and/or large graphic health warnings on all tobacco packages; Enact and enforce bans on Tobacco Advertising, promotion and sponsorship; Eliminate exposure to Second Hand Smoke in all indoor workplaces, public places and public transport; Implement effective mass media campaigns that educate the public about the harms of smoking tobacco use and second hand smoke. He congratulated Mr. Waqas for the WHO Award which has been conferred upon him for his outstanding contributions towards tobacco control in Pakistan.

Mr. Muhammad Waqas Tarar thanked the WHO for its technical collaboration and contribution towards tobacco control in Pakistan. He assured that Tobacco Control Cell would take all possible measures to reduce prevalence of tobacco use in the country and save lives of people of Pakistan.