

**Training Course on “Developing Impactful Awareness Raising
Campaigns towards Reducing Tobacco Consumption”**

30 May 2022, 12:00 PM, Türkiye Time

Opening Statement of H.E. Mr. Nebil DABUR
Director General of SESRIC

بِسْمِ اللّٰهِ الرَّحْمٰنِ الرَّحِیْمِ

Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

السَّلَامُ عَلَیْكُمْ وَرَحْمَةُ اللّٰهِ وَبَرَكَاتُهُ

Very Good Day to all of you

I am pleased to welcome you all to the Training Course on “Developing Impactful Awareness Raising Campaigns towards Reducing Tobacco Consumption” which we organize within the framework of SESRIC’s Tobacco Free OIC Capacity Building Programme (TF-CaB).

At the outset, I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to H.E. Mr. Muhammet Nurullah ATALAN, General Manager of Türkiye Green Crescent Society (YEŞİLAY) and his team for their cooperation with SESRIC through nominating competent experts to provide this training course for the benefit of participants from the relevant Ministries and national institutions in charge of tobacco control in the OIC MCs.

My sincere thanks and appreciation are also extended to Dr. Yüksel DENLİ, Director of Tobacco and Alcohol Department at the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of the Republic of Türkiye, and his team for their contribution to this important training course through sharing the experience of Türkiye in packaging and labelling measures on tobacco products as a tool of public awareness.

My deep thanks and appreciation are also extended to all participants attending from the relevant Ministries and national institutions in charge of tobacco control in the OIC MCs for designating part of their valuable time to participate in this training course.

Dear Participants,

As we all know, the tobacco epidemic is one of the biggest public health threats globally. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), tobacco epidemic kills more than 8 million people every year.

More than 7 million of these deaths are the result of direct tobacco use, while around 1.2 million are the result of non-smokers being exposed to second-hand smoke.

In addition to its impact on public health, tobacco use imposes significant economic burden on countries, including the cost of healthcare to treat the diseases caused by tobacco and loss of human capital and productivity resulting from tobacco-attributable morbidity and mortality.

In fact, tobacco use increases the poverty of individuals and families and exacerbates its impact by deteriorating household budgets needed to cover the essential needs, including food, accommodation and clothing.

Furthermore, the impact of the tobacco epidemic disproportionately harms low and middle-income countries as over 80% of 1.3 billion tobacco users worldwide live in low and middle-income countries, where the tobacco-related illness and death levels are the highest.

Although countries have made remarkable progress in strengthening tobacco control policies over the past decade, the prevalence of tobacco use slightly decreased among adults in low and middle-income countries, particularly in the LDCs.

According to SESRIC's most recently published "Statistical Yearbook on OIC Member Countries", the prevalence of smoking among the adult population of 15 years and above has declined to reach 22.8% in 2018 compared to 31.3% in the year 2000.

It is also notable that the prevalence of smoking was still high among adult male population in OIC MCs, estimated at 39.7% in 2018 while Female smoking prevalence remained low at 5.9%.

Given this state of affairs, reducing tobacco consumption awareness campaigns should be considered as critical tools in combating tobacco epidemic; tools that are, unfortunately, being underutilized at the global level.

Sustained large-scale of such campaigns can efficiently drive millions to quit smoking, prevent the initiation of new smokers, and create an enabling environment for policy change. The well-designed anti-tobacco mass media campaigns attract more attention, cause more discomfort and fear and promote behavioural changes.

These anti-tobacco campaigns encourage smokers to think about quitting, preventing relapse, and deterring non-smokers from starting to smoke by making them more aware of the risks for health caused by tobacco products and toxic compounds in cigarettes.

Dear Participants,

In 2007, SESRIC has presented its first report on “Tobacco Control in OIC Member Countries” as a reference study to the 1st Islamic Conference of Health Ministers held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

In 2010, we initiated the SESRIC Tobacco-Free OIC Capacity Building Programme (TF-CaB) with a view to fostering an OIC-wide coordinated approach to curb and control the spread of tobacco epidemic in the OIC MCs.

Within the framework of this Programme, we organise short-term training courses (like this one), training workshops, and study visits on various technical aspects related to tobacco control. These capacity building activities are usually conducted based on the principle of matching the needs and capacities of the relevant institutions in the OIC MCs.

Also, in the domain of research, SESRIC has been preparing the OIC Health Report since 2011 as one of the main technical background documents for the biennial sessions of the Islamic Conference of Health Ministers (ICHM). The report evaluates the health sector performance of OIC MCs by analysing the latest trends in major statistical health indicators.

The report identifies tobacco consumption as one of the most common risk factors behind many non-communicable diseases (NCDs), which kill over 40 million people each year. In this context, the report underlines the importance of health education and public awareness about risk behaviors, including tobacco consumption, especially among youth.

The 6th edition of SESRIC OIC Health Report will be prepared this year to be submitted and presented to the upcoming 8th Session of the Islamic Conference of Health Ministers (ICHM) scheduled to be held in Maldives.

In the mandated area of statistics, SESRIC makes serious endeavours towards ensuring the availability of the necessary health-related statistical data and information on our MCs that would make them better informed of each other's potentials, needs and capacities in order to facilitate their elaboration on cooperation projects in this important domain.

In this context, our main statistical database, the OIC Statistics (OICStat) Database, currently contains data on 1,512 socio-economic indicators classified under 27 categories for the 57 member countries dating back to 1970. Out of these indicators, 23 are tobacco-related indicators under the Tobacco Control category.

Moreover, in order to support the ongoing tobacco surveillance and monitoring programmes in the OIC MCs, SESRIC facilitates since 2014 the integration schemes of the questions found in the Tobacco Questions for Surveys (TQS) Handbook into the nationwide surveys of a number of selected OIC MCs based on the terms set forth by the CDC and the CDC Foundation.

Following the successful implementation of the TQS, the TQS-Youth “the subset of key questions from the Global Youth Tobacco Survey (GYTS)” was developed in 2019 with a view to incorporating the globally standardised tobacco questions for youth into ongoing national surveys.

So far, SESRIC has received commitments from 16 OIC countries for the integration of TQS and 2 OIC countries for the integration of TQS-Youth into their ongoing national surveys.

In this context, we have published in December last year, in collaboration with the CDC and CDC Foundation, a Report on the “Implementation of the Tobacco Questions for Surveys (TQS) in Selected OIC Member Countries: Evidence for Action”.

Finally, with a view to facilitate sharing and exchanging of knowledge, experiences and best practices among our MCs in this important domain, we have launched in 2020 a Portal on “Tobacco Free OIC Initiative”. This Portal provides an active platform and knowledge hub for professionals from OIC MCs on various resources and information in the area of tobacco control.

Dear Participants,

I believe that this training course will contribute to strengthening the technical capacities of the participants through adding value and knowledge to their experience and knowledge in this important area.

Before concluding, I would like to thank you all once again and wish you a fruitful exchange of experiences and a successful training throughout the upcoming days.

Thank you all for your kind attention. والسلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته