

Tobacco Smoking is single largest cause of many diseases

Multan, November 17: Smoking is the single largest cause of many diseases as it causes many of diseases including cancer of different kinds, cardiac, tuberculosis, asthma, shrinking of mouth tissues and arteries and foot infections.

It was stated by Executive Coordinator The Network for Consumer Protection Nadeem Iqbal while he was addressing to a workshop organized by The Network for Consumer Protection in collaboration with World Health Organization, Pakistan Medical Association, and National Tobacco Control Cell here on Thursday.

He said that every day in Pakistan, 1200 young children start smoking and most of them are hooked as a smoker for lifetime.

“Situation becomes alarming as shisha and other smokeless tobacco products including gutka and snuff are rising trends among youth. The time could not be better to talk about tobacco control in Multan and to discuss the most alarming global challenge in public health.

He said that his organization was working for effective implementation of tobacco control laws and to make national legislation inline with the guidelines of Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC), global public health treaty by World Health Organisation (WHO).

“Need for rigorous media campaign was emphasized for advancing tobacco control in Pakistan in an interactive session with Media in Multan as mass communications have bridged societies around the world, and have also magnified the impact of media on global public health while the media becomes the most influential and powerful part of tobacco control campaign” he said.

He said that according to World Health Organisation, tobacco use is a risk factor for six out of eight leading causes of death in the world and around 40 percent of male and 9% of female smoke in Pakistan while this number is growing perilously.

“Pakistan is among top 15 countries with high tobacco consumption in world which spotlights oral cancer as high as 40 percent in Indo-Pakistani sub continent due to use of products made by tobacco and betel leave and nuts. This grim the efforts of tobacco control advocates as every year 100,000 deaths occur due to tobacco related diseases in Pakistan” he added.

Communication Officer the Network for Consumer Protection Aasma Qamer said that Pakistan has introduced tobacco control legislation in 2002 which is followed by many SROs but unfortunately the national tobacco control laws were never presented to a legislative platform for review.

“Pakistan lags behind to comply domestic tobacco control law with international commitment Frame Convention on Tobacco Control and February 27, 2010 was the

deadline for Pakistan to go for an FCTC compliant law since it has ratified the international treaty, FCTC in 2004” she said.

She said that it is high time for Pakistan to conceive the magnitude of problem and move ahead towards stricter and effective implementation of tobacco control policies.

“Every year Pakistan, assumes growing Non-communicable Diseases (NCDs) burden and tobacco use is one of the leading sources of NCDs. NCDs cause nearly 36 million global deaths annually, of which 80 percent are in low and middle income countries. Government of Pakistan can also take pride and join the select list of countries have implemented tobacco control policies in true spirit and reduce the burden of tobacco related diseases” she said.

She said that Provincial Implementation Committees have been formed in all four provinces of Pakistan, besides, District Implementation Committees have also been set up with the basic objective to ensure the implementation of tobacco control policies at district level; however, efforts are still required to accelerate the functioning and pace of implementation.

She said that absence of an autonomous regulatory authority for tobacco control policies at provincial and district level makes the situation dismaying.

She said that government needs to consider its international commitments towards achieving Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by United Nations and implementation of FCTC guidelines by prioritizing tobacco control on its agenda introduce comprehensive national action plan for tobacco control.