

TheNation

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Alliance for tobacco control formed

OUR STAFF REPORTER

ISLAMABAD – Policy makers, opinion formers, legislators, and tobacco-control advocates in a seminar here on Wednesday reinforced their commitment for effective tobacco control initiatives in Pakistan and decided to formulate a Grand National Alliance for Tobacco Control.

The decision was made in a National Advocacy Conference on Tobacco Control organized by The Network for Consumer Protection in collaboration with Ministry of Health, Tobacco Control Cell and the World Health Organization (WHO).

DC Health Dr. Rasheed Juma stressed the need to create volunteer groups to report the violations of tobacco control legislation. He appealed to all health professionals to take an oath to discourage smoking and educate their patients.

Member National Assembly and Standing Committee on Health and Human Rights Yasmeen Rehman suggested that the Education Ministry include tobacco control in the curriculum of schools to educate the youth. Moreover, she stressed the need to sensitize parliamentarians to generate the debate to make tobacco control a part of the national health policy and plan.

Pakistan lacks the implementation of tobacco control legislation due to a lack of awareness and civic education, Dr. Khalif Bille the country representative of WHO stated while addressing the conference.

The Ministry of Health is taking the initiative to introduce the pictorial warnings legislation into domestic legislation by February 2010 and joining the select list of countries to have introduced this legislation, Dr. Arif Azad, Executive Coordinator The Network for Consumer Protection stated while appreciating the role of the tobacco control cell.

At the end of the conference, a resolution was passed to be submitted to the legislators by all stake holders on the platform of Grand National Alliance for Tobacco Control, appealing to the Government of Pakistan to undertake comprehensive tobacco control measures in order to reduce public health expenditures incurred on account of tobacco related diseases and deaths, to regulate illicit tobacco trade, and to impose heavy taxes on the tobacco industry to reduce tobacco consumption.