



*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

**Message from**  
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**REGIONAL DIRECTOR**  
**WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGIONAL OFFICE**  
**to the**  
**WORLD RABIES DAY**  
**Teheran, Islamic Republic of Iran, 28 September 2010**

Your Excellencies, Guests and Colleagues

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to the celebration of World Rabies Day.

I would like to thank the Iranian Ministry of Health and Medical Education for celebrating World Rabies Day 2010. The first World Rabies Day was organized in September 2007 by the two founding partners – Alliance for Rabies Control and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Atlanta (CDC) – and with co-sponsorship of WHO and other partner organizations.

The aim of World Rabies Day is to raise awareness about the impact of human and animal rabies, its easy prevention and how to eliminate the disease in animals and humans.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is estimated that 55 000 deaths occur each year because of rabies. The vast majority of these deaths occur in rural areas of Africa and Asia. In industrialized countries human rabies is close to being eliminated owing to the vaccination of domestic dogs and the implementation of other control measures. It is estimated that in the absence of post-exposure prophylaxis, about 327 000 people would die from rabies in Africa and Asia each year.

In the WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region, rabies remains an important public health problem in a number of countries. Several hundred thousand post-exposure treatments are administered every year and around 300 human cases are reported every year.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, more than 100 000 people are reported to be bitten by animals and to receive post-exposure prophylaxis every year. In this respect, we would like to

appreciate the efforts undertaken by all stakeholders participating in the implementation of the programme of control of rabies in Iran.

I would like to mention two important facts. The first is that eliminating rabies in dogs significantly reduces human exposure to the disease, as demonstrated in industrialized countries and in Latin America. The second is that mass vaccination of dogs is the single and most-cost-effective intervention to control and eliminate canine rabies.

Let me conclude by emphasizing that successful rabies control should involve multiple activities and interventions. In addition to vaccination of domestic dogs and of people at risk, and post-exposure measures, other activities include managing dog populations, compulsory notification of rabies in humans and animals, ensuring availability of reliable diagnostic procedures, and raising community awareness about the disease and preventive measures. Such interventions are conducted by many different sectors and stakeholders, such as health, agriculture or veterinary authorities, ministry of interior, nongovernmental organizations, community leaders, media, education and school health, universities and research centres. Rabies control will not succeed unless there is good coordination between all sectors involved in implementing these procedures.

I would like to thank all of you for attending this event and wish you a successful outcome.