



In the name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Address by
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to the
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CONTROL...TOWARDS NEW HORIZONS”
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Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning to all of you.

It gives me great pleasure to be with you in this Conference to congratulate you on the launch of the Hadramout Health Organization.

First and foremost, let me thank H.E. Eng. Abdulla Ahmed Bugshan, President of Hadramout Health Organization, for giving me this opportunity to address such a distinguished audience. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to him and all distinguished staff members for their strong commitment and efforts to launch this organization. Also I would like to thank the conference secretariat for organizing this conference on cancer control.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am also pleased to note that your conference coincides with World Cancer Day (4th of February), a globally observed day that helps in raising people’s awareness of cancer and how to prevent, detect or treat it. The theme for 2011 is cancer prevention: 30%–40% of cancers can be potentially prevented.

As we all know, cancer is already an important public health problem worldwide. According to the latest GLOBOCAN report, an estimated 12.7 million new cancer cases and 7.6 million cancer deaths occurred in 2008. Furthermore, a higher proportion of the cancer burden occurs in the less developed regions of the world, in terms of both cancer incidence and cancer mortality. GLOBOCAN also reported that, assuming underlying rates of cancer will remain unaltered over the next two decades, it is projected that by 2030 there will be

almost 21.4 million new cases diagnosed for cancer and over 13.2 million deaths annually. Identifying the number of cases and deaths of cancer patients is not enough, as we need also to measure the problem in terms of needless suffering of cancer patients and their families. Moreover, in many low-income countries; cancer patients often experience catastrophic financial hardship associated with impoverishment because of health care bills.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Currently in the Eastern Mediterranean Region, cancer ranks fourth for mortality in the adult population, closely following cardiovascular diseases, infectious diseases and injuries. Furthermore, the Region is expected to witness a critical increase in cancer incidence and mortality due to many powerful global trends that contribute to the anticipated rise of cancer in the Region.

The increasing trends can be attributed to many factors, like population aging and exposure to risk factors, including smoking, unhealthy diet, physical inactivity and environmental pollution. Smoking alone is estimated to be responsible for 22% of cardiovascular diseases in Eastern Mediterranean Region, and for the vast majority of some cancers and chronic respiratory diseases.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Our major concern is that we are still struggling with weak health systems with inadequate staff, shortages of medicines and insufficient funds for cancer screening and treatment. Needless to say, such health systems are very poorly prepared to cope with the demands and costs of cancer care.

In addition, in our Region, an average of 50% of cancer patients are diagnosed at a very late stage of illness, when treatment is no longer effective and the only possible intervention is palliative care including pain relief. Yet, even this intervention fails to reach more than 5% of the terminally ill cancer patients every year.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Considering the significant burden of cancer in the Eastern Mediterranean Region and in order to lay the foundations for a coordinated comprehensive approach to cancer control in our Region, the Regional Cancer Control Strategy was developed to represent a key milestone for the fight against cancer. The overall goal of the strategy is to improve cancer control programmes and provide guidance for all Member States to develop comprehensive and integrated cancer control plans, with the key components of cancer

prevention, early detection, cancer treatment, palliative care, cancer registry and cancer research.

Building on this strategy, every effort has been made to direct the focus of Member States to cancer prevention and early detection, knowing that 40% of cancer can be prevented and 40% can be detected early and cured completely.

Prevention is by far the best option, to reduce exposure to most common risk factors. Tobacco control constitutes a key opportunity to prevent cancer on a grand scale. WHO introduced a package of six interventions that have proven their ability to reduce tobacco use by focusing on children and youth education in schools, media and protection against second-hand smoke and support for quitting, and which can prevent millions of deaths. We need to focus on population-wide measures that make it easier for people to adopt healthy lifestyles. To do so, we need to engage other sectors in a whole of government approach.

Early detection of cancer is vital. Health systems need to focus on cancer screening and raising awareness of the early signs and symptoms of the most common cancers. People should be encouraged to seek medical advice as soon as possible.

Palliative care and pain management have also been recognized as a regional priority, to reduce suffering and improve the quality of life of cancer patients, as well as their families. To this end two training workshops were held during 2010 to strengthen national capacity and improve palliative care services in the Region.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am sure this conference will be an important step forward in building the regional resources and support the fight against cancer in the Region. I would therefore like to assure you that we, at the Regional Office, are fully committed to provide all the support needed by your reputable Organization and to work together toward our common goal to fight against cancer.

I wish you all a successful conference and fruitful outcomes.

Thank you for your attention.