



In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Address by

Dr Ala Alwan

Regional Director

WHO Eastern Mediterranean Region

to the

**WORLD BLOOD DONOR DAY
14 June 2012**

Ladies and Gentlemen, Honorable Colleagues, Distinguished Guests.

On 14 June 2012, World Blood Donor Day will be marked with events around the world to raise awareness of the need for safe blood and blood products and to thank all voluntary unpaid donors for their life-saving gift of blood. I am pleased to mark the global celebration of World Blood Donor Day 2012 and its celebration here in the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The transfusion of blood and blood products helps to save millions of lives every year. It can help improve life expectancy and the quality of life for patients suffering from life-threatening conditions, and supports complex medical and surgical procedures. In many countries, demand outstrips supply, and blood services face the challenge of making sufficient blood available, while also ensuring its quality and safety. Today, in 62 countries, national blood supplies are based on 100% (or more than 99.9%) voluntary unpaid blood donation. However, 40 countries still depend on family donors, and even paid donors, and collect less than 25% of their blood supplies from voluntary unpaid blood donors.

Unfortunately, in our region the situation is no better. Only two countries have declared 100% non-remunerated voluntary blood donation, in spite of all efforts to increase this proportion, and in spite of sincere advocacy for voluntary non-remunerated blood

donation. The other countries of the Region still depend mainly on family or replacement donation. The goal of the World Health Organization (WHO) is for all countries to obtain their blood supplies entirely from voluntary unpaid donors by 2020.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This day was established as an annual event in 2005 by the Fifty-Eighth World Health Assembly (resolution WHA58.18). The observance of the day is an activity organized by WHO in collaboration with key international organizations, including the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, the International Federation of Blood Donor Organizations, the International Society of Blood Transfusion and the American Association of Blood Banks. It calls on Member States, organizations of the United Nations system, multilateral and bilateral agencies, international organizations, nongovernmental organizations and bodies concerned with global blood safety to come together in promoting and supporting voluntary non-remunerated blood donation as the foundation for safe and sufficient supplies of blood and blood products. This day has become an integral part of national blood donor programmes and an occasion to thank, appreciate and acknowledge voluntary blood donors, as well as nongovernmental organizations who strive for advocacy of voluntary non-remunerated blood donation among both youth and adults.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The theme of the 2012 World Blood Donor Day campaign, “Every blood donor is a hero” focuses on the idea that every one of us can become a hero by giving blood. While recognizing the silent and unsung heroes who save lives every day through their blood donations, the theme also strongly encourages more people all over the world to donate blood voluntarily and regularly. The 2012 theme also resonates widely in relation to other everyday “heroes” – such as fire fighters, police, rescue workers, civic leaders and “champions” of social causes and community improvement.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With your continued support and the interest of other partners in the global community, World Blood Donor Day will be an inspiring act of global solidarity not only to thank those individuals who give the gift of blood, but also to encourage wider efforts to achieve universal access to safe blood transfusion.

I hope that you have made the gesture of donating blood today.

Thank you for being with us on a day of giving.

God bless you all.