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Chairman Senate holds meeting with President of IPU



Governor calls for promoting KP's heritage, tourism through floral festivals



Muqam urges KP govt to focus on public issues

AF moot urges protection of children, youth from tobacco, nicotine products



E.G REPORT

ISLAMABAD: Parliamentarians, senior government officials, regulators, health experts and civil society representatives came together at a stakeholders' meeting organized by Aurat Foundation (AF) in Islamabad today, calling for stronger tobacco control measures, including increased tobacco taxation, larger graphic health warnings (GHWs) and stricter enforcement of regulations on Tobacco Advertising, Promotion and Sponsorship (TAPS).

The meeting, titled "Orientation on Strengthening Graphic Health Warnings and Increasing Tobacco Taxation," was held at the Envoy Continental Hotel, Islamabad, with participation from parliamentarians, the Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, the Tobacco Control Cell, PEMRA, health experts and civil society organizations.

Addressing the gathering as Chief Guest, Ms. Farrah Naz Akbar, Parliamentary Secretary for National Heritage, stressed that tobacco control must remain a national priority and called for collective action to protect the younger generation from the devastating health and social consequences of tobacco use. She said that Parliament has a critical role in translating public-health evidence into effective legislation and policies, emphasizing that protecting children and young people from tobacco addiction is not merely a health responsibility but a collective national obligation. Ms. Farrah Naz Akbar underscored the importance of using taxation as one of the most effective tools for reducing tobacco consumption. She noted that higher tobacco taxes can make tobacco products less affordable, particularly for young people, while simultaneously generating additional resources for the government. She also called for strengthening graphic health warnings on cigarette packs, observing that larger and more prominent warnings make the health consequences of smoking more visible to consumers and serve as an important deterrent, particularly for young and first-time users.

The Parliamentary Secretary further emphasized the need for stronger implementa-

tion of restrictions on Tobacco Advertising, Promotion and Sponsorship, particularly in the rapidly changing digital environment. She stressed that tobacco companies should not be allowed to use advertising, sponsorship, social media, indirect promotion or other innovative marketing techniques to attract children and young people.

MNA Ms. Huma Chughtai stressed the need of a joint societal action on tobacco control and vowed that the legislators shall not be lagging behind and announce bringing a resolution in the parliament for increasing GHW on cigarettes packs.

Dr. Arsalan Haider, Director, Tobacco Control Cell, elaborated on the role of the Tobacco Control Cell in promoting effective tobacco control policies, particularly measures related to graphic health warnings and implementation of Pakistan's tobacco control commitments.

Discussing the role of the media regulator, Mr. Rahat Ali, Director General, PEMRA, highlighted the responsibility of regulatory authorities in preventing tobacco advertising, promotion and sponsorship and ensuring compliance with existing restrictions.

Earlier, Syed Safdar Raza, Team Lead, Aurat Foundation, in his welcome remarks, highlighted the organization's continued efforts to strengthen parliamentary and public awareness on effective tobacco control.

Giving an overview of Pakistan's tobacco control context and the WHO MPOWER framework, Mr. Aftab Ahmed, Tobacco Control Cell, Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations and Coordination, highlighted the importance of effective implementation of tobacco control measures, particularly stronger graphic health warnings.

Dr. Mati Ur Rehman, Dean, Health Services Academy, while speaking on "Increasing Health Risks of Tobacco made a case for elimination of tobacco use in all forms from the society. The participants agreed that tobacco control requires a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach, with Parliament, government ministries, regulatory bodies, academia, civil society and communities working together to reduce tobacco use.