

For Immediate Release



Experts on tobacco control: If the Greeks can do it, so can the Lebanese!

Beirut, Lebanon- 08/06/2011 - Lebanon can learn from Greece, the leading smoking nation in the Mediterranean, as well as the successes made in the United States and other countries in order to implement an effective tobacco control policy, said public health and policy experts during a recent AUB lecture.

“In Lebanon today you are facing what we faced 25 years ago in the U.S.; we were pushing to have bans of smoking in closed areas in restaurants and no one imagined we could do it,” said Professor Richard Daynard who teaches law at the Northeastern University School of law and is at the forefront of an international movement to establish the legal responsibility of the tobacco industry for tobacco-induced death, disease and disability. He is president of the law school's Public Health Advocacy Institute and chair of its Tobacco Products Liability Project.

Entitled, “Translating Science into Effective Tobacco Control Policies: Three Perspectives,” the lecture was organized by the AUB’s Tobacco Control Research Group (AUB-TCRG) and the Issam Fares Institute for Public Policy and International Affairs and was held on June 2 in West Hall’s Auditorium A.

Daynard noted that it would be easier for Lebanon to achieve success as it could learn from the hiccups faced by other countries that have led successful tobacco control policy development.

The task is even easier because of the ratification of the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) which was put into force in 2005 and was signed by 172 states including Lebanon, said Daynard. He added that the implementation of the FTCTC in Lebanon is crucial, especially the articles that prohibit promoting tobacco through advertisement or sponsorship, and the articles prohibiting the accessibility of tobacco to youth and minors especially the nargileh smokers, as well as other articles dealing with packaging, taxation, and liability.

Daynard also showed how the usage of certain human rights treaties was used elsewhere and can be used in Lebanon to protect human health, noting that some of them have been used in the FTCC. Examples are the Conundrum of Rights of Children (CRC) for protesting the children’s health and the Convention on Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW).

He stressed the role of NGOs and the strategy of shaming the countries in media “because countries don’t like to be shamed.

Speaker Gregory Connolly, professor of public health at the Harvard School of Public Health, said that Lebanon has the second highest number of smokers in the Mediterranean region after Greece, citing ways that Lebanon can adopt following Greece's example. For instance, the price of a cigarette package should be increased because the current price is accessible to everyone. In Greece, imposing a tax on cigarettes proved successful as it was a means to help the country out of its economic crisis. Connolly argued that the tax on cigarettes can be used in many ways in Lebanon.

Connolly emphasized the work of NGOs and research and academic centers to push the government to create laws that ban smoking. He also stressed the use of media showing different ads and billboards used in many countries. Moreover, he said that joint website treatments as well as research studies in hospitals, smoke-free school education, and tobacco control research are very useful.

Connolly concluded by saying, "Science is the basis of what we do; we have a duty to bring that to society."

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Note to Editors

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Founded in 1866, the American University of Beirut bases its educational philosophy, standards, and practices on the American liberal arts model of higher education. A teaching-centered research university, AUB has more than 600 full-time faculty members and a student body of about 8,000 students. AUB currently offers more than 100 programs leading to the bachelor's, master's, MD, and PhD degrees. It provides medical education and training to students from throughout the region at its Medical Center that includes a full service 420-bed hospital.

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