**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: MAY 30TH, 2018**

**World No Tobacco Day: Coalition for Tobacco Control calls for immediate awareness to be spread about cardiovascular disease risks from tobacco.**

**[CITY NAME] - “Give priority to health over business, save our hearts from tobacco abuse!” This is the call of more than 250 partners of Coalition for Tobacco Control – Pakistan (CTC-Pak) during their nationwide activities from all over Pakistan on this World No Tobacco Day. While the world is going for stricter tobacco control policies, the people of Pakistan are still struggling with cardiovascular diseases on very high scales due to tobacco use.**

“Tobacco is the primary contributor to 16% of all non-communicable diseases (NCDs) deaths particularly cardiovascular. And cardiovascular diseases such as heart attacks are the 19% of the total deaths making it the highest NCD in Pakistan. Cancer and other chronic respiratory diseases account for majority of other NCDs related deaths.” [YOUR NAME],[DESIGNATION],[LOCATION] told while talking to the press. “Which is why we at CTC- Pak this year on WORLD NO TOBACCO DAY urge everyone to be look after their hearts and protect it from tobacco exposure. Tobacco Kills. Save your heart, save your health.”

According to WHO report, tobacco use disproportionately harms some of the world’s most vulnerable populations. More than 80 percent of the world’s smokers live in low- and middle-income countries, where the harms of tobacco use are further exacerbated by a lack of access to health care. Tobacco use also creates economic burden, costing countries a staggering $1.4 trillion dollars a year in health care costs and lost productivity.

“The global tobacco epidemic kills more than 7 million people each year and in Pakistan, 108,800 deaths are associated with tobacco. This is an established medical fact that tobacco use is major cause of heart attacks or strokes in Pakistan. People have the right to know and to their health. The government is responsible for protecting people’s health from tobacco exposure and for this purpose it has to strictly enforce the tobacco control laws in Pakistan to restrict access to tobacco.” [YOUR NAME] said. “We urge the government of Pakistan to not give in to the tobacco industry’s influence and take immediate action such as enforce the long delayed 85% Pictorial Health Warning (PHW) on cigarette packs to inform about health hazards associated with tobacco use. We need to caution the smokers and others around him on priority basis.”

Unfortunately the decision for larger pictorial warning on cigarette packs (to 85%) in public health interest has not been implemented even after three years of its announcement in 2015. The Government of Pakistan also compromised on tobacco tax this year as well by accommodating the tobacco industry by continuation of the third tier which allows most selling brands with least tax. “The consumption has increased two folds. The government has already lost revenue during 2017 by playing into the hands of the tobacco industry. Cigarettes are cheaper now and accessible to anyone including children and youth. We need stricter policies, enforcement measures and more awareness to better understand the laws. We demand 85% PHW. We demand high significant raise in tobacco taxes. We need to protect our present and next generation.” [ANOTHER MEMBER][DESIGNATION][LOCATION] said.

Pakistan ratified and became a party to the World Health Organisation’s Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC) in 2004. After, 14 years, Pakistan has still a long way to go in order to fulfill its international obligations by implementing stronger tobacco control policies. The Coalition for Tobacco Control – Pakistan is a coalition of more than 250 civil society partner organisations hailing from all four provinces of Pakistan and is working towards strengthening the development and implementation of tobacco control policies in Pakistan.

**Contact:**

**[NAME, PHONE NUMBER, EMAIL FOR LOCAL CONTACT]**