



**Address of World Health Organization Representative in Lebanon  
on the occasion of the launching of the fourth national mental health awareness  
campaign  
ESA - 18 September 2019**

His Excellency Minister of Health,  
Friends and Esteemed Guests,

We are gathered here today to launch the fourth national mental health campaign organized annually by the Ministry of Public Health since 2015. Our campaign this year is particularly important, as it aims at improving the mental health and wellbeing of our workforce, our Organizations' greatest asset.

As adults, work takes up a large share of our lives. Work is where we spend most of our time, it is the source of our income, work is where we make friends. It has personal, economic and social value.

Work therefore, can be good for your mental health and wellbeing as it gives you the chance to achieve your potential and to be productive.

Factors such as long or inflexible working hours, poor communication and management practices, harassment and bullying, poor working conditions, limited participation in decision-making, are all factors that negatively influence the mental health of employees. Mental health problems, such as depression, anxiety, stress, and others, have a direct impact on workplaces through increased absenteeism, reduced productivity, and increased costs. Many people are losing their jobs and are not able to achieve their full potential, because our workforce is not supported enough.

Esteemed Guests,

There is increasing evidence that both the content and context of work can play a role in developing a mental health problem in the workplace. There is also strong evidence that workplaces with high levels of mental wellbeing are more productive.

WHO describes a healthy workplace as one where workers and managers actively contribute to the working environment by promoting and protecting the health, safety and well-being of all employees. It is therefore vital that we address mental health and wellbeing at work, for those with existing problems, and for those at risk, and for the workforce as a whole.

The Ministry of Public Health in Lebanon, with the support of WHO and partners, has started reforming the mental health system with the development of a national mental health strategy for

Lebanon. Workforce is an important target of this strategy and employment is an objective for Lebanon's mental health system.

This campaign is an important milestone for mental health in Lebanon. By increasing awareness of work-related impact on mental health, and the growing recognition of the need for 'psychologically safe' work, we are helping in driving organizational efforts to improve psychosocial working conditions. We hope that this can be the start of a major shift in our working culture towards businesses and workplaces ensuring mentally healthy working environments and reducing the substantial burden of work-related mental health problems. Addressing mental health and wellbeing of employees is also fully in line with the Sustainable Development Goals, which call on us to "ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages".

Esteemed Guests,

I would like to take this opportunity today to reaffirm the continued support of the World Health Organization in Lebanon to the efforts of the Ministry of Public Health and all partners in the promotion of mental health and wellbeing in Lebanon.

We believe in workplaces where everyone can thrive and reach their full potential. We also believe in our role as managers, employers, employees, and business owners, in creating thriving communities.

Dear friends,

If you are a manager, a business owner, a team leader, or work in human resources department, or just believe in supporting the wellbeing of your colleagues – this campaign is for you. It makes no difference what business you're employed in – by taking mental health seriously, you can build a better team, you can be a better leader, and you can be a better colleague.

Thank you.