Press Release
**Towards a Tobacco-Free Generation: Tunisia Launches National Charter for Tobacco-Free School Environments and "Kids’ Athletics" Program in 19 Primary Schools**

*Saturday, 17 May 2025*

 In a strategic nationwide move to promote healthy lifestyles among Tunisian children, 19 primary schools across several governorates, particularly in rural areas, have officially signed the National Charter for a Tobacco-Free School Environment. This milestone demonstrates a strong commitment to ensuring a safe and healthy learning environment for students, especially in underserved communities.

This initiative is part of the implementation of Article 8 of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, which calls for protecting children from exposure to tobacco products in all public spaces, with a particular focus on educational settings.

The charter aims to shield school environments from all forms of tobacco exposure and to prevent the growing trend of tobacco use among youth, now a major public health concern. Alarming data from the 2024 national survey highlights the urgency:

* 14.1% of students aged 13–15 currently use tobacco products including 19.4% of boys and 8.8% of girls
* When including e-cigarettes, the rate rises to 22.8% overall; 30.7% among boys and 14.9% among girls
* 47.5% of smokers had tried cigarettes before the age of 12

Alongside tobacco use, other health risks are emerging, such as reduced physical activity and increased screen time among children. National studies reveal that:

* Over 75% of children exceed recommended screen time
* Regular physical activity dropped from 35% in 2009 to just 12.1% in 2020

To address these challenges, the launch of the “Kids’ Athletics” program coincides with the charter signing. This initiative seeks to promote physical activity in schools as a preventive tool against risky behaviors like smoking and to foster healthy habits from an early age.

The “Kids’ Athletics” program provides a practical, engaging, and educational approach to child health. Designed as a model initiative, it integrates sports, education, and health promotion to prevent risky behaviors and reach over 7,000 children nationwide.

To ensure effective implementation, 19 teachers from the participating schools underwent a two-day intensive training, both theoretical and practical, led by the Tunisian Athletics Federation. The training focused on how to use the “Kids’ Athletics” toolkit to deliver fun and pedagogically sound physical activities.

This program represents a successful example of multisectoral collaboration, initiated by the National Sports Observatory under the Ministry of Youth and Sports, and developed in partnership with the Ministries of Health and Education, the Tunisian Athletics Federation, the World Health Organization (WHO), and the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control.

This initiative is a concrete step toward implementing the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control in Tunisia and directly contributes to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals; particularly Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being) and Goal 4 (Quality Education in a Safe and Healthy Environment).