

Address by

***Dr Samlee Plianbangchang
Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia***

At the

***Joint Inauguration of The 28th Meeting of Ministers of Health of
Member States of the WHO South-East Asia Region***

and

***The Sixty-third Session of the WHO Regional Committee for
South-East Asia***

***7 September 2010
Bangkok, Thailand***

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Excellency Abhisit Vejjajiva, Prime Minister, the Royal Thai Government, Excellency Jurin Laksanawisit, Minister of Public Health, the Royal Thai Government, Honourable Ministers of Health of Member States of the WHO South-East Asia Region, Dr Margaret Chan, Director-General, World Health Organization, distinguished country representatives, honourable guests, ladies and gentlemen:

It is my privilege on behalf of WHO to warmly welcome you all to the joint inauguration of; the Twenty-eighth Meeting of Health Ministers; and the Sixty-third Session of WHO Regional Committee.

At the outset, I would like to express my overwhelming thanks to the Royal Thai Government for hosting these two important meetings. And I gratefully thank the Right Honorable Prime Minister, Abhisit Vejjajiva, for graciously accepting to inaugurate the joint opening.

Excellencies,

Thailand, a Member State of WHO SEAR, has made a remarkable progress in her national development. Among others, the country has already achieved various targets set forth in the UN MDGs. Thailand is among the global pioneers in implementing Primary Health Care approach, which is the key to health for all people; the country has developed a tool guide for furthering the work on community empowerment, which is the essence of PHC development. This guide is being shared with other Member States, both within and outside the Region.

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

By overall, SEAR is on track towards the achievements of the UN MDGs by 2015. Over the past two decades, Member States had achieved significant progress in reducing child mortality. However, this achievement is not seen in the area of maternal mortality reduction in some Member States. Weak health systems have been identified as the main bottleneck, strengthening of health systems based on PHC is considered to be the key to the achievements of health related MDGs.

In this connection, a seminar on Decentralization of Health Care Services Delivery held recently was considered very significant. A majority of countries in the Region had made commendable progress in ensuring that health care services effectively reach the “hard-to-reach” population groups.

At the same time, excellent progress has been achieved in eliminating neglected tropical diseases; that primarily affect the poor, vulnerable and underprivileged populations.

In another front, “health of the urban poor” is being given due attention. The attempt is being made to advocate the application of PHC principle in the urban settings. A regional meeting on this important topic has been planned for next month.

Honorable Ministers, Distinguished Representatives,

Health of our people in the Region is remarkably affected by the impact of climate change. To mobilize political commitment, WHO-SEARO will hold two important meetings in the coming October. A Regional Conference of Parliamentarians on Protecting Human Health from Climate Change. And a High Level Preparatory Meeting for the Conference of Parties, COP 16. Unless the impact on health from climate change is properly addressed through our unified approach; the high disease burden in SEAR will be further aggravated.

Excellencies,

In conclusion, I wish the honourable ministers and distinguished representatives, a conducive atmosphere in deliberating upon various agenda items of regional importance.

I would also like to express my sincere thanks to the local organizing committee for the excellent arrangement made for the meetings.

Thank you.