

Remarks

By
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Regional Director, WHO South-East Asia

At

Ministerial Regional Forum on Environment and Health

Bangkok, Thailand
8-9 August 2007

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**DR SAMLEE PLIANBANGCHANG
REGIONAL DIRECTOR, WHO SOUTH-EAST ASIA**

May it please Your Royal Highness;

Honorable Ministers;

Distinguished guests;

Ladies and gentlemen:

It is indeed an honour and privilege for me to speak on behalf of the World Health Organization.

This meeting signifies a vital partnership to ensure a safe and healthy environment. Recent findings indicate that a quarter of the global burden of disease is due to environmental degradation. Every year, an estimated 6.6 million deaths in Asia are attributable to various health risks from the environment.

In the urban settings, where almost half of the world's population lives, civic amenities are unable to keep pace with the burgeoning population.

In the Asia-Pacific more than 20 per cent of the population does not have access to safe water, and about 50 per cent of this population has no access to sanitation facilities. Thousands of chemicals are circulating in the environment today. On the other hand, we are all quite aware of the extreme climatic change, and its adverse health impact.

The complexity of relationships in health development among sectors, countries and agencies is clearly recognized. However, we have the potential and opportunities that augur well for intersectoral cooperation. The most conspicuous of these is the increased awareness among policy-makers of the need for multisectoral actions for health. Let us work together in a concerted manner to ensure a safe and healthy environment.

With this, let me wish the meeting all success in endorsing the proposed Charter; and in agreeing to the proposed workplans that address environmental health issues.

Thank you.