

***Opening Remarks***

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

***At***

***The Second session of the Conference of the Parties to the  
WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (FCTC)***

***Bangkok, Thailand***  
***30 June-6 July 2007***

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REGIONAL DIRECTOR, WHO SOUTH-EAST ASIA**

Excellency, Mr Paiboon Wattanasiritham, Deputy Prime Minister, the Royal Thai Government; Excellency, Ambassador Juan Martabit, President of the Bureau of the Conference; Honourable Deputy Director-General of WHO, Dr Asamoah-baah; Distinguished Parties of the Conference; Honorable guests; ladies and gentlemen;

It is really a privilege for me to be here at this august gathering, and to welcome you all to the South-East Asia Region of WHO. Indeed, it is a matter of great satisfaction that this important meeting is being held in our Region. This reflects the trust and confidence of the Parties in the ability and potential of this Region in tobacco control - the ability and potential of countries to take forward the crusade against tobacco use. The South-East Asia Region has a very high prevalence of tobacco smoking, especially in young adults. This situation contributes significantly to the already high disease burden. To have the Conference session here also highlights the commitment of the Royal Thai Government to the world-wide tobacco control agenda.

The WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control is a very fast growing international convention. Within a short span of time, 146 Member States have become Parties to the Convention. All, but one country, in the South-East Asia Region have joined the Convention. Furthermore, all countries in the Region have identified tobacco control as their priority in health development. National tobacco control programmes in our Region are comprehensive in scope, and based mainly on the WHO Framework Convention. I can

assure the Conference that all countries in this Region are fully committed to the implementation of various provisions in the Convention.

Since the First session of the Conference, Parties from the South-East Asia Region have been actively engaged in the activities to meet their Treaty obligations. In this process, unwavering support has been provided by WHO to ensure meeting of such obligations. In the SEA Region, most countries have national policies and plans of action for tobacco control in place. And several others have comprehensive tobacco control legislation. WHO is continuing to provide back-up support to ensure sustainable tobacco control in countries.

Four countries in South-East Asia Region have been selected for participation in the Bloomberg Global Initiative to Reduce Tobacco Use. WHO is making all efforts to avail of this opportunity to assist countries in their efforts towards that end. Member States in the Region still need outside help in their tobacco control activities. I am glad that this session of the Conference will also discuss the subject of Financial Resources and Mechanism of Assistance. An intercountry meeting held in Bangladesh last year agreed to the development of a Need Assessment Template - a template to map out the assistance that the countries need in their implementation of the WHO Framework Convention. I am pleased to learn that this Need Assessment Template will also be discussed at this meeting. It will be most helpful in measuring the extent of support needed by developing countries in fulfilling their Treaty obligations.

I am confident that this session of the Conference will have fruitful deliberations on all agenda items. Before concluding, let me sincerely congratulate and thank the Royal Thai Government for hosting this very important event. I wish this session of the Conference all success.