

POLICY FORUM
Climate Change, Its Impact and Challenges
to the Education and Health Sectors with Special
Reference to Children

WELCOME REMARKS

Prof. Dr. Jaime Z. Galvez-Tan
Chair, 49th GBM 2010

A warm and pleasant good morning to all! Sawasdee Kap!

Very special greetings to Dr. Wittaya Jeradechakul, Director of SEAMEO Secretariat, Dr. Supamit Chunsuttiwat representing the Director General of the Department of Disease Control of the Ministry of Public Health and Professor Dr. Pratap Singhasivanon, Secretary General and Coordinator of the SEAMEO Tropmed Network.

To the officials of the various ministries of health and education in the region, our partners in the SEAMEO network, members of the Governing Board of the SEAMEO TropMed; Ladies and Gentlemen:

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) are upon us. In 4 years (by 2015) each of our countries will report to the global community whether we have achieved the eight MDGs or not. The MDGs is a good convergence point for children. MDG One is eliminating extreme hunger and poverty ; MDG Two is universal education for all; MDG Three is about gender equality; MDG 4 is improving child health; MDG 5 improving maternal health; MDG 6 effective control of major diseases; MDG 7 is environmental sustainability and MDG 8 is about global partnership. All these MDGs affect children as the most vulnerable group of individuals, especially the poorest and remotest children. Our forum today also converges on children and examining the effects of climate change in children's health and education.

Both the MDGs and the mitigation of risks due to climate change require partnership and solidarity for action from the education sector, health sector, policy makers both at National and Local levels, researchers and scientists. This is the challenge of this policy forum.

There are 3 associations of climate change and children come into focus (Bunyavanich and Landrigan et al): (1) Environmental change or anthropogenic changes like on clean air, safe drinking water, ultraviolet radiation from various personal and home appliances and gadgets, solid waste management, sustainable sanitation and hygiene; (2) Climate change or geogenic changes like thermal extremes, weather disasters, earthquakes and tsunamis and (3) Ecological change coming from the combined effects of anthropogenic and geogenic changes like food security, allergies, emerging and re-emerging

diseases and lifestyle diseases. We hope to see these various associations today from our resource speakers.

At this point, I call our attention to the Convention of the Rights of Children (1989) which highlights the four major rights of children: to right to survival, the right to development; to right to protection and the right to participation. What is meaningful to all of us here in this policy forum is the right of children to participation. Children themselves can be researchers and agents of change for disaster risk reduction, environmental protection and preservation. For example children are the best change agents in reforestation and greening programs. They can plant native, indigenous and endemic trees found in Southeast Asia. It is not just planting trees but maintaining biodiversity using native, indigenous and endemic Southeast Asian species. We need also to recognize the inter relationships of trees, forests and biodiversity of flora and fauna as key features for a sustainable health and environment leading total human health and well being especially of children.

There are 3 expectations where this policy forum can focus on: (1) Integration of children's agenda of health and education and climate change into intergovernmental decision making bodies; (2) Adaptation of the national program of action for climate change and children's health and education in city, provincial and municipal plans; and (3) Knowledge management and shared learning between and among countries and communities for action on climate change with children's health and education as priority.

Allow me to salute the leadership of Dr. Pratap Singhasivanon as our Secretary General and Coordinator of the SEAMEO TropMed Network for steering our countries to analyze the 21st century issues in tropical medicine in our region and ensuring action to respond to these issues and concerns. Our aspirations are high that all of us will be able to come out with policy recommendations to mitigate the effects of climate change on the education and health of Southeast Asian children/

Thank you very much. Kap Khun Kap. Mabuhay!