

## Remarks

by

**Dr. Juliet Fleischel**  
**WHO Representative to Lao PDR**  
**54<sup>th</sup> Governing Board Member, Lao PDR**  
**19<sup>th</sup> August 2015, 9:00 a.m.**

Your Excellency, **Assoc. Prof. Dr. SomOck Kingsada** , Vice-Minister of Health,  
Lao PDR

Members of the Governing Board of Southeast Asian Ministers of Education  
Organization (SEAMEO) and Regional Tropical Medicine and Public Health  
Network (TROPMED Network);

Esteemed government officials and international partners;

Distinguished guests and colleagues;

Ladies and gentlemen;

Good morning.

It is an honour for me to address you, greetings from Dr. Shui Yang, Lao RD  
WPRO Health, on behalf of the World Health Organization, at the opening of the  
54<sup>th</sup> Governing Board Meeting of SEAMEO TROPMED and to welcome all  
delegates to the Lao People's Democratic Republic.

I am pleased to learn that the theme for this year's meeting is "Outbreak  
Management of Emerging Health Issues" and that the SEAMEO TROPMED  
Network plans to strengthen its work in the area of Outbreak Management and  
its Collaboration with WHO.

Disease outbreaks can affect countries at any time, and one of the networks  
priority areas have long-lasting devastating impacts on affected populations. In  
recent years, the Ebola virus disease in West Africa; and closer to home, the  
Middle East Respiratory Syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) in the Middle East  
and Republic of Korea has highlighted the importance of a resilient health  
system that is well prepared to manage evolving public health emergencies and  
reduce human sufferings, deaths, financial hardships and economic losses.

When a health system is ill-equipped to deal with outbreaks, the affected population can become very vulnerable. This is why many countries continue to invest in outbreak management and preparedness; in building a resilient health system by investing in infrastructure, governance, surveillance, coordinated supply chain of medicines and technology; increasing government health investments and expenditures; and investing in human resources capacity building to increase the number of qualified and trained health workers.

In this aspect, the collaboration with SEAMEO TROPMED with focus on human resource development, a primary mandate of the network, is therefore vital.

From the experiences of Ebola, important lessons learnt for health practitioners have helped shape preparedness activities for outbreak management which included strategy and coordination, surveillance, contact tracing and laboratory, case management, infection prevention and control, community engagement and social mobilization; all of these work to ensure that countries become better equipped and prepared to deal with any public health events of regional and international concern.

As countries continue to strengthen its public health fundamentals, and build a resilient health system, coupled with infectious disease surveillance, laboratory detection and epidemiology investigation; I hope to see SEAMEO TROPMED continue to develop the capacity of individuals and institution to support this development.

One concept that is widely adopted in WHO Western Pacific and Southeast Asia regions for outbreak management is the Asia Pacific Strategy for Emerging Disease (APSED) which introduced Field Epidemiology Training, Rapid Response Team, Risk Assessment and Risk Communication as part of preparedness activities for emerging disease outbreak, which may complement or can be integrated into some of SEAMEO TROPMED Network program.

The other would be the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005) which allow WHO to keep countries informed about public health risks, and works with partners to help countries build capacity to detect, report and respond to public health events.

And as always, WHO stand ready to support and collaborate with SEAMEO TROPMED to support research, advocate health policies that will strengthen outbreak management, empower communities and minimize the social and economic impacts that are brought on by the next emerging infectious disease or public health issues.

Thank you.