

CALCUTTA DECLARATION ON PUBLIC HEALTH

The following declaration, based on the deliberations and recommendations of the Conference, was unanimously adopted by the delegates at a special session on the concluding day presided over by Mr Jyoti Basu, Honorable Chief Minister of West Bengal, India.

*We, the participants in this Regional Conference on Public Health in South-East Asia in the 21st Century, appreciate the substantial achievements made in improving the health status of the people in the countries of the South-East Asia Region during the past decades. However, we enter the 21st century with an **unfinished agenda** of existing health concerns, and **new and complex challenges** that demand innovative solutions. We uphold the centrality of meeting the health needs of the community and our responsibility to preserve, protect and promote the health of the people. We commit ourselves to the goals of poverty alleviation, equity and social justice, gender equality and universal primary education, which are all essential elements in the pursuit of **health for all**. We recognize that expertise and experience in Public Health and capacity-building are essential for sustaining **partnerships** in designing, developing and providing health for the community. And we emphasize the importance of Public Health as a multidisciplinary endeavor to meet the health needs of people.*

*Having noted the progress in public health practice, education, training, and research in the countries of the South-East Asia Region, and having reviewed the lessons from Public Health-related policies and programs, we endorse the following **strategies and directions** for enhancing health development in the South-East Asia Region in the 21st Century:*

- (1) Promote Public Health as a discipline and as an essential requirement for health development in the Region. In addition to addressing the challenges posed by ill-health and promoting positive health, Public Health should also address issues related to poverty, equity, ethics, quality, social justice, environment, community development and globalization;*
- (2) Recognize the leadership role of public health in formulating and implementing evidence-based healthy public policies; creating supportive environments; enhancing social responsibility by involving communities, and increasing the allocations of human and financial resources;*
- (3) Strengthen Public Health by creating career structures at national, state, provincial and district levels, and by establishing policies to mandate competent background and relevant expertise for persons responsible for the health of populations; and*
- (4) Strengthen and reform Public Health education, training, and research, as supported by the networking of institutions and the use of information technology, for improving human resources development.*

We urge all Member Countries as well as WHO to continue to provide leadership and technical cooperation in building partnerships between governments and UN and bilateral development agencies; the academia; NGOs; the private sector; the media, and other organs of civil society, and to jointly advocate and actively follow-up on all aspects of this Calcutta Declaration on public health.