

Opening Address by
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At The Opening Ceremony
48th Governing Board Meeting SEAMEO TROPED Network
13-14 August 2009,
Hotel Istana Kuala Lumpur,

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Pratap Singhasivanon, Secretary General / Coordinator SEAMEO TROPED Network,

Dr. Tran Thi Giang Huong, Director General, Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Health Vietnam

Distinguished SEAMEO TROPED Network Governing Board Members

SEAMEO TROPED Regional Centre Directors

Delegation from Member Countries and Partner Organizations

SEAMEO TROPED Network officials

Your Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Delegates and Observers, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good Morning, Selamat pagi

The government of Malaysia through the Ministry of Health is proud to be the host of this 48th Governing Board meeting.

We are indeed very honoured to be an active member of this regional cooperation since its inception in 1966 and start of operation in 1967. The Ministry's Institute for Medical Research is designated as one of the Regional Centres of the Network.

SEAMEO TROPED Network as an organization is a living testimony of regional cooperation. Allow me to quote the former Minister of Health of Thailand, H.E. M.L. Pin Malakul “

“the need for regional cooperation is so obvious. Our countries are

neighboring countries. The problems of our region are our problems. If we do not cooperate and start solving our problems now, who else can better solve our problems for us? “

These are the words spoken at the time of the establishment of the Network. It is relevant then and still very relevant now.

To date, SEAMEO TROPMED Network has made significant contributions in the field of tropical medicine and public health. However, there are still some gaps we need to work on. Even if we have similar general characteristics as neighboring countries we still have peculiarities that affect the rate of development taking place in each of our countries. Sharing and working together towards reducing these gaps become more eminent. The demand to work collaboratively through health initiatives and programs are more pronounced today. These collaborations can take place in several ways:

- In education and training. The Network can provide more opportunities for education and training to Member countries in terms of numbers and reach . It can develop and offer new courses that will enable the health professionals of the member countries to address the emerging health problems.
- In the area of research, we need to put together the existing expertise and resource available at the network to work together and to support other Member countries.
- Information sharing between and among Member countries through the Network should be institutionalized and made more regular.

SEAMEO TROPMED Network as a regional organization has a comparative advantage of being able to work with both Ministries of Health and Education., providing opportunities and facilitating discussions between these two ministries both at the national and regional levels. Based on its organogram, the Network is one of the 18 Centres of the Education Ministers' Organization. But the mandate of the TROPMED Network also necessitates that its Governing Board members are high officials of the Ministries of Health.

The focus for this meeting's thematic symposium is H1N1. Again, this is a validation of the relevance of the organization and the timeliness of its discussions. H1N1 is a pressing and urgent issue we are now facing not only in the region but also in the whole world. I am sure you will all agree with me that H1N1 is now high in the agenda of your Ministries as well.

We need to discuss how SEAMEO TROPMED Network can best support the Member countries to meet the demands of this pandemic. Member countries need to agree on how best to work together so that collectively we can mitigate the negative consequences of this pandemic. We need to explore how the Ministries of Health can work with the Ministries of Education and other government agencies and development partners to effectively implement strategies that will be able to minimize the impact of this pandemic especially among the most vulnerable groups.

As for Malaysia we are currently together with all government agencies and development partners to address this concern.

I am looking forward to the results of this meeting most especially on the recommendations and courses of actions to address the issue of H1N1.

It is in this note of optimism that I declare this meeting open.