

Development Partners' Speech: By Dr Hashim Elzein (WHO Rep.)

Excellency Dr Abdul Karim Rasa'a
Minister of Public Health and Population

Distinguish Colleagues

Good Morning

On behalf of my colleagues representing the Development Partners for Health and Population I wish to convey our congratulation to your Excellency on your recent appointment which represents the trust bestowed on you by H.E. the President. We wish you success in your noble mission.

This appointment is made in a period which is of great importance for the integration of our efforts especially after signing jointly the statement on Alignment and Harmonization in December 2005. We hope that the spirit of the statement is going to be well maintained. To this aim, we avail ourselves of this opportunity to welcome the trend of cooperation between MoPHP and the DPs which, we believe will enrich by joint efforts for achieving the health goals in Yemen. Our role as partners is to support the Health Sector and not to play the role of implementers assuming that MoPHP is fostering ownership, fully engaged in and responsible for the health programs and their impact on health status.

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The challenges are great in the health sector, which is well characterized by the agonizingly slow progress towards the Millennium Development Goals of reduced maternal and child mortality; the rising HIV/AIDS; and the double burden of communicable diseases plus non-communicable diseases, including the tobacco epidemic and the avoidable deaths from road traffic crashes. All these compounded by the weak health systems and deficiency in qualified human resources.

There is a need to place far greater emphasis in healthcare on the prevention of illness and the promotion of good health rather than over focusing predominantly on treating ill-health. This has been starkly highlighted by the WHO, World Bank, GTZ and other Health Organization reports. Given the enormously increased expectations of public health, greater investment in the public health is now crucial if this opportunity is not to be missed.

The DPs jointly with the MoPHP would like to put more emphasis in the following three areas:

- 1) Review of the Health Sector Reform
- 2) Drugs
- 3) Consultation Mechanism

The first issue is the Review of the Health Sector Reform. There is a wide consensus between MoPHP and DPs on the implementation of the review of the health sector reform. The Health Sector Reform needs to be revised and focused on priority setting and consensus building, in line with the strategic 5 years plan. Focus is needed on strengthening institutional capacity to translations decisions into health. It should work out health financing and allocation strategies and needs to concentrate on reaching health MDGs and other health priorities and become more poverty focused. Some positive steps had already been taken by the DPs such as allocation of resources for this exercise.

We as partners are looking for development of clearly assigned accountabilities and responsibilities for due process and results in all programs and particularly HS Review and they should be consistent with resources.

As the HS Review demands extensive efforts, realistic implementation plan with clear time-table needs to be developed jointly by MoPHP and DPs.

The access to information enables the real participation of the DPs in supporting health policies and strategies. This emphasizes the importance of reinforcement of transparency in our joint collaborative activities.

The DPs recognize the work and efforts of the Health Policy unit in materializing the HS Review and ask for acceleration of the process.

The second issue is the Drugs. The current drug supply system still poses great concern for the DPs as the drug policy in MoPHP is not yet clear. This issue should be top in the agenda as clear policy decisions are now needed. As for the new development, so far, we are not suggesting any further change or any reversal of the process. We are expecting that the results of the recently formed "Joint Committee" for Drugs be communicated to us. DPs are ready for providing technical support for MoPHP in developing a sustainable drug supply system each in his area of expertise. The report prepared by Dr Duke (WHO consultant - January 2006) can be the starting point for the reform process in the pharmaceutical sector.

The third issue is the Consultation Mechanism. However, different mechanisms are in place for communicating with DPs but still most of them are deficient in many aspects. There is a need for an appropriate consultation mechanism which is transparent and timely. MoPHP and DPs shall encourage facilitate, as appropriate, consultation between the two parties for purpose of promoting common understandings regarding activities undertaken by both parties. As MoPHP is in the drive seat it should develop jointly with the DPs the basis and rules for this consultation mechanism within the spirit of the signed statement on alignment and Harmonization.

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We as DPs would like to reiterate our adherence to the priorities set by MoPHP and our commitment to support MoPHP programs and projects. Looking forward for fruitful and successful cooperation in the near future we wish you and your supporting staff all the best towards achieving the noble health goals.

Thank you