

International Leprosy Summit – Overcoming the Remaining
Challenges,
Bangkok, Thailand, 24–26 July 2013

BANGKOK DECLARATION TOWARDS A LEPROSY-FREE WORLD

We, the Ministers of Health from the 17 high-burden leprosy countries in all WHO regions, with relevant stakeholders, and the World Health Organization;

Appreciating the enormous strides made in the reduction of the global burden of leprosy over the past 25 years, including the attainment of the global goal of elimination of leprosy as a public health problem as defined in the World Health Assembly resolution WHA44.9 (in 1991), to reduce the prevalence of leprosy to less than 1 case per 10 000 population;

Acknowledging the huge reduction of disease burden through the widespread implementation of multidrug therapy (MDT) among other prevention and control and care approaches;

Further acknowledging the contribution of all partners involved in leprosy work;

Believing that the long experience of the leprosy control programme in achieving the goal of elimination of leprosy as a public health problem globally will be used to improve the interventions against other neglected tropical diseases;

Concerned, however, with the continuing occurrence of new leprosy cases annually in significant numbers in various countries and also with the continued existence of hyperendemic areas within countries that have led to the consequent stagnation of the leprosy situation over recent years;

Noting with concern the rising complacency consequent to perceiving the leprosy problem as relatively small, and that such complacency results in reduced political commitment, relegated priority, and decreased resources towards dealing effectively with this public health problem;

Recognizing the set target in the current enhanced global strategy for further reducing the disease burden due to leprosy (2011–2015), following the recommendations of the WHO Expert Committee on Leprosy in its eighth report, and *considering* the World Health Assembly resolution WHA66.12 (2013), on Neglected Tropical Diseases, which includes leprosy, and that urges Member States to implement the WHO roadmap for accelerating the work to overcome the global impact of such diseases;

We, the Ministers of Health from the 17 high-burden leprosy countries in all WHO regions, with relevant stakeholders, and the World Health Organization;

1. ***declare*** that it is time for the leprosy-endemic countries, as well as their international and national partners, to reaffirm their commitments and reinforce their participation towards addressing leprosy in order to ensure a leprosy-free world at the earliest;

2. **urge** governments and all interested parties to accord higher priority for activities towards a leprosy-free world, and allocate increased resources in the coming years, in a sustainable manner, and in doing so:
 - a. **aim** to reduce the burden of leprosy and ultimately move towards a leprosy-free world;
 - b. **apply** special focus on high-endemic geographic areas within countries through vigorous and innovative approaches towards timely case detection and treatment completion aiming to achieve leprosy elimination as a public health problem at subnational levels;
 - c. **achieve** the global target of reducing the occurrence of new cases with visible deformity (grade 2 disability) to less than one case per million population by the year 2020;
 - d. **prevent** occurrence of disability through early detection as well as limiting disabilities among already disabled persons;
 - e. **involve** communities and the forums of persons affected by leprosy in the process of strategy formulation and implementation of leprosy care, including physical, social and economic rehabilitation and social integration, as per WHO guidelines¹;
 - f. **promote** empowerment of persons affected by leprosy and ensure effective implementation of United Nations resolutions A/RES/65/215, Elimination of Discrimination Against Persons Affected by Leprosy and their Family Members, and A/HRC/15/30 Principles and Guidelines for the Elimination of Discrimination against Persons Affected by Leprosy and their Family Members.
 - g. **monitor** the progress towards attainment of targets through a mechanism at the national level with technical support from WHO and other relevant partners;

¹ Guidelines for strengthening participation of persons affected by leprosy in leprosy services. New Delhi, World Health Organization, 2011.

3. **Reaffirm** our political commitment and guidance towards a world free of leprosy.

Bangkok

24 July 2013