

Global Forum for Research and Innovation for Health 2015

MESSAGE

Undersecretary VICENTE Y. BELIZARIO

Good afternoon everyone!

Thank you to **Sec. Mario Montejo** of the Department of Science and Technology, **Mmboneni Muofhe** Deputy Director-General of the Department of Science and Technology in South Africa, **Carel IJsselmuiden** Executive Director of the Council on Health Research for Development, and to all our fellow colleagues from the Philippines and around the world that are present here today. And, most especially, thank you to all those who made this event possible.

It is a distinct honor for me to be giving this message. I believe that this is a unique opportunity for me to share with you what I believe our expectations for this event should be.

This Forum's theme of *"People at the Center of Health Research and Innovation"* continues to be relevant today and I think will continue to be relevant into the future, especially in countries where achieving better health outcomes is a continual challenge.

Putting people at the center of health research and innovation just simply makes sense. Because for what purpose do we do health research and strive for innovation? Research for research's sake may no longer be acceptable in a world where new challenges in public health emerge but where resources to address these may not necessarily be increasing.

I am pleased that the Forum's pillars are anchored on increasing the effectiveness of health research and innovation and addressing the world's most pressing problems in public health.

At the global level, the landscape of health research and innovation is vast and growing larger as we speak as academicians and researchers continue to be pressured to produce new research. But, really, how much of this research is being used by countries that need this research the most? And how effective are the solutions being proposed? Health research should be able to address these needs.

But the greater challenge lies in identifying effective solutions. The public health sector in the Philippines faces this challenge everyday as we seek to achieve our own targets for Universal Health Care.

Aside from this is the added challenge of an increasing demand for accountability in terms of performance, not only from government, but from the Filipino people. So, at this point, we are in great need for effective solutions, and I think that other countries are in a similar position.

The world, including the Philippines, is in great need for ways to ensure food safety and security, optimal health in mega-cities, and disaster risk reduction. In this day and age when many advancements have already been made in food and nutrition, problems with malnutrition persist partly because of our changing environment that is making it even more difficult to produce adequate food.

We are also encountering problems in ensuring food safety, which is not only limited to issues in food preparation but even in the emerging problem of fake food. All of these threaten the food safety and security of many countries.

The rise of mega-cities around the globe has also threatened the health of the people that live in them. With such a fast and an uncontrolled growth in population which burdens the resources available, ensuring the health and well-being of these people is a great challenge that needs to be addressed quickly.

Finally, disaster risk reduction is relevant to many countries, including the Philippines, which perennially face the challenge of managing the health emergencies that arise from disasters such earthquakes, typhoons, and floods. If this truly is the new norm, then we should be prepared to mitigate the risk, adequately respond to the immediate effects, and rehabilitate affected areas in preparation for a possible future event.

What are the best solutions to these problems? I pose this question not only to the researchers and academicians present today, but also to my fellow colleagues in government, our development partners, businessmen and industry partners, non-government organizations, civil society, and to the youth. Let us not leave these solutions on paper, but let us bring these solutions to fruition in the real world.

I hope that this Forum will set a precedent for other research fora to follow suit in pushing for real-world solutions to the most pressing problems in public

health. I pray that the next few days will be productive for all of us, and that we find the answers to our most pressing needs.

Let us all strive to address these public health challenges strategically, and let us all work together for a world that is safer, healthier, and happier.

Thank you very much. Congratulations to all the organizers, and wishing everyone a fruitful and meaningful Forum 2015 in the coming days!