

## GLOBAL FORUM ON RESEARCH AND INNOVATION FOR HEALTH 2015

### CALL TO ACTION MESSAGE

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Good afternoon everyone.

First and foremost, I would like to thank and congratulate the Department of Science and Technology and the Council for Health Research and Development for co-organizing the Global Forum 2015. To the Council for Health Research and Development, thank you for giving us the opportunity to co-host this momentous event with you. It is indeed encouraging and inspiring to witness students, academicians, researchers, innovators, policymakers, implementers and funding agencies from all over the world come together in the past four days sharing research and innovation and exploring opportunities for partnership and collaboration.

The forum, themed "People at the Center of Health Research and Innovation" underscored the two equally important who's in research and innovation: who we are doing it for; and who will be doing it. Indeed, for us to have a constant stream cutting-edge output relevant to the people would require a huge knowledge capital, which in turn requires an enabling environment for research and innovation to flourish. Fortunately for us, the sessions had outlined the key steps we have to take.

As we reach the end of the forum, I call on everyone to participate in realizing this environment. And like many big goals, we can start with a few concrete steps.

**First, let us secure the resources we will require in a sustainable manner, and creatively.**

To do this, we need to articulate a solid investment case. And while we have to maximize what we can get out of direct budget provision and reallocation, we also need to look at other innovative means or viable sources such as specific earmarks or co-financing with the private sector. The Philippines' success in passing revised excise tax on tobacco and alcohol, which resulted in a dramatic increase in fiscal space for health, illustrates the power of political leadership, earmarking and a well-established business case. In fact, the national government budget for health is expected to be 3 billion US dollars next year. We have also begun investing in health systems research but the challenge remains for us to secure the money.

**Second, let us complement this by establishing governance mechanisms and systematically building new institutions and transforming current ones.** We need institutions that are in it for the long haul, agile, fearless and accountable for their outputs; institutions that will nurture young talents as they begin their career in research and will welcome them back after their training overseas; institutions that understand that their excellence in research and scholarship should have the ability to make direct both knowledge and economic contributions. We at the Philippine Department of Health have

historically contracted individuals for research work, but we have also started partnerships at the institutional level through PCHRD, UP-NIH and Philippine Institute for Development Studies. We foresee more partnerships like this with public and private universities and research institutions across the country and even overseas.

**Third, let us catalyze partnerships and collaboration among individuals and institutions, from public and private sector, both locally and internationally, between researchers and consumers (policymakers and implementers).** We need to build on each others' strength, maximize resources in building individual, national and global capacities. Remember the conversations you've had; review the business cards in your pockets - they may just be your next co-author or co-investigator.

**Fourth, together with Ministries of Education and Science and Technology, let us start the dialogue on how we can ingrain appreciation for science and technology early in schooling as well as enhancing the primary and secondary education towards a curriculum focused on science and technology.** This is especially relevant for other emerging economies that seek to become knowledge powerhouses too. The current reforms being undertaken in the Philippine education sector provide a suitable window for discussions to start.

**Finally, let us empower and enable people to value and use research so that they can take better care of their health.** This will allow people to share the responsibility in building healthy communities.

In the years to come, we will undoubtedly face more challenges in the health sector brought about by ageing, proliferation of lifestyle-related diseases, outbreaks, climate change and rapid urbanization. But so long as we have a vibrant research community driving policies and innovation, we can be certain that nothing is impossible to overcome. Moreover, we can always turn these challenges around to become opportunities for accelerating towards Universal Health Coverage and health for all.