



World Federation of Public Health Associations
Fédération mondiale des associations de santé publique
Federación Mundial de Asociaciones de Salud Pública

12th World Congress on Public Health Closing Ceremony Remarks by President

Dear Esteemed Colleagues,

It is my great honor to address you at the close of the highly successful 12th World Congress on Public Health. The city of Istanbul provided an excellent venue to tackle the major public health issues at this critical juncture in history. I especially wish to thank the mayor and people of the city of Istanbul for hosting the World Federation of Public Health Association's triennial international congress.

Our Congress signaled that the time has come for public health to assert itself on the world stage. It is incumbent upon all of us to heed Dr. Margaret Chan's message: public health must grasp its critical role in this rapidly changing world to bring to the attention of world and national leaders that public health offers much of what is needed to address the consequences of flawed systems of governance.

Over the course of the five days of the Congress, colleagues came together in solidarity to share knowledge and experiences on the important topics of Education, Research, and Practice, the key themes of the Congress. Participants tackled the difficult questions through oral and poster presentations, as well as in their face-to-face discussions and impromptu side meetings. The plenary and concurrent sessions stimulated discussions and ideas for practical and effective responses to priority public health issues.

The key messages that I, as the President of the World Federation of Public Health Associations, encourage you to take home with you are:

First, we cannot abandon the Millennium Development Goals - they are central to everything we do;

Second, while health services are an important factor in protecting and improving the health of people, the public health community must become actively involved in advocating for a social determinants of health approach to address inequalities in health;

Third, universal and equitable access to health services, especially primary health care services, is a necessary precondition to addressing priority public health issues;

Fourth, inter-sectoral action for health, whether across different levels of government, across disciplines, or across space, must include actively the participation of all citizens;

Fifth, and most importantly, everything we do must be based on human rights and create the conditions that allow everyone, whoever they may be or wherever they may be, to be empowered to control the factors that affect their individual health and the health of their communities.

Let us not forget that all crises, be they financial, environmental, political, or social, affect the poor, the disadvantaged and the marginalized much greater than the rich and those of us, a minority in the world, who have control over the factors that affect their health.

As Sir Michael Marmot mentioned this morning in his plenary address, all ministers are health ministers. It is up to all of us to advocate to our governments, national, provincial or municipal, to read, understand and apply the recommendations from the Report of the WHO Commission on the Social Determinants of Health.

As the World Federation moves forward into the future, we embrace our vision of leading the quest for a healthy global society and to promote and protect global public health. Our core values of the right to health, social justice, equity, diversity and inclusion, partnership, and ethical conduct will serve us well as we move forward.

The WFPHA has a unique role to play. We act as a catalyst, as a collaborator and as a convener. As a catalyst, we help support national and regional public health associations to improve their capacity to advocate and be agents of change for public health. As a collaborator, we work closely with and bring together diverse communities and organizations on common issues, to find ways and means of working together to create and put into place effective responses. As a convener, we bring people from around the world, from many diverse perspectives and socio-cultural groups, to exchange ideas, experiences and strategies to improve public health practice and healthy public policy.

We leave this Congress with a very important outcome: “The Istanbul Declaration”. It is the cornerstone in the construction of our path forward in the world. It will guide and inspire the global public health community’s contribution to improving the health of all people around the world.

As we bring this international gathering to a close, I would like to extend my personal sincere gratitude, as well as the appreciation of the World Federation of Public Health Associations and the global public health community to His Excellency President Gul for the support his government has provided to our Congress. I would also like to express our gratitude to Recep Akdag, the Turkish Minister of Health, as well as his ministry for their full support to this Congress.

I also want to take this opportunity to thank our hosts, the Turkish Public Health Association. Under the leadership of my very dear friend and partner in public health, Dr. Hikmet Pekcan, we worked very hard over the past three years to arrange this Congress. None of this would have been possible without the hard work of Dr. Pekcan and the unbelievable Mr. Bekir Metin and their colleagues from the Turkish Public Health Association and Zed, the company that has provided the logistical support. Let us take a moment to acknowledge their work.

The World Health Organization has been an invaluable partner to the World Federation of Public Health Associations over many years. We are extremely grateful to all the organization has done to work on behalf of public health and to support the Federation, including this Congress. A special thank you must go to Dr. Margaret Chan for her participation, especially in the face of an international health crisis.

Next I would like to thank the Presidents of the National Associations of Public Health, as members of our Federation, who through their dedicated commitment to the Federation are contributing to safeguard and improve public health systems and the health of people in their own countries and throughout the world.

Finally, I extend my gratitude to the members of the Scientific Committee and the WFPHA Secretariat staff for the many hours they spent working to ensure a successful Congress.

To all of the people working on behalf of public health present at this Congress, I thank you for coming to Istanbul and sharing your ideas and thoughts, your perspectives and concerns, your desires and dreams, your knowledge and skills, your experiences, successes and even your failures. Your attendance at this World Congress, the only one of its kind for the global public health community, is a critical determinant of health. We learn, individually and collectively, and reinvigorate our determination to work day in and day out to make this world a healthier, more equitable place to live.