

12th WORLD CONGRESS ON PUBLIC HEALTH
April 27 - May 1, 2009 - Istanbul, Turkey
Closing Remark by Dr. Mengistu K. Asnake
President, Ethiopian Public Health Association

Dear Prof. Paulo Buss, President of WFPHA

Dear Prof. Ulrich Laser, President Elect WFPHA

Dear Prof. Hikmet Pekcan, President of TPHA

Distinguished delegates of national associations, institutions, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Ethiopian Public Health Association, I would like to extend my sincere appreciation and congratulations to our counterparts here in Istanbul, Turkey for successfully organizing the 12th World Congress on Public Health and the WFPHA for bringing us from the different parts of the continent for one cause of **“Making a difference in global public health”**.

The whole Congress - from the plenary sessions to the workshops, from the concurrent sessions to the poster exhibitions - was marked by fruitful discussions, interventions and displays on a wide range of public health issues.

We have also been able to learn from each others experiences on the importance of having the right combination of Governance, Policy, Research and Practices in meeting our public health challenges, but also making use of opportunities available to us to improve and better deliver Health Care services.

Ladies and gentlemen, and my fellow public health practitioners,

I don't know about you, but when I look at what we have done this week, I could not help to say “you never stop to learn something new about your profession, not about the science behind public health issues we have been trained on, but about the efforts and the means by which you are making a difference in your communities.

That is what makes this profession of ours so special. There is nothing more fulfilling than saving lives everyday, or protecting the health and well-being of people from hazards and preventing unnecessary death. Therefore, I can wholeheartedly say to our Turkish host, you have lived up to the theme of our Congress **“Making a Difference in Global Public Health: Education, Research and Practice”**.

Let us continue to build on the good will, the wealth of experience and expertise, and the network that is abundantly available amongst us, and let us continue to invest it in Making a Difference in Public Health.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Having said that I would like to reflect on the next road map for the World Federation of Public Health Associations:

As you are aware, my country, **Ethiopia** has the honour to host the 13th World Congress on Public Health in 2012. We are grateful to have the Congress in Africa for the first time since the new Millennia.

I am very pleased and encouraged by the number and level of participation during this Congress in Istanbul.

Coming from a country known for its hospitality and origin of the first humankind, I am not only going to invite you but also to challenge you to come to 13th World Congress on Public Health in 2012 to be held in Addis Ababa – called **the Capital City of Africa**.

I am here to assure you of the enthusiastic support of the Federal Government of Ethiopia through the Ministry of health and other governmental and non-governmental agencies to make the congress a successful one.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Our flag carrier Ethiopian Airlines (Ethiopian) the continents leading carrier operates flights to over 50 international destinations in Africa, Asia, Europe, the Middle East and North America. Addis Ababa is also a destination for most international airlines carriers such as British, KLM, Lufthansa, Egypt, Kenya, Turkish, Yemeni, Emeritus, and more. So make sure you mark your calendar.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Having the Congress in Africa is a golden opportunity for you to come face-to-face with the challenges faced by many African countries in addressing public health concerns. It is no secret that in sub-Saharan Africa, every year, millions of children under the age of five die, hundreds of women die in pregnancy and childbirth, significant number of deaths are also reported from HIV/AIDS alone.

Efforts under the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to tackle poverty and ill-health, I must say, have been courageous and inspiring. But all too often it has been slow and at a pace and scale that fails to respond to or recognize the magnitude of the challenges facing Africa.

My reference to the condition in sub-Saharan Africa is not to present a dark and gloomy scenario, but to highlight the need for an urgent move for action. The failure to address the basic health care needs and issues will endanger and undo all the achievements made so far and further invites the loss of more lives.

You will also have the opportunity to see the success stories and what has been accomplished with very little resources. You will discover day to day stories of what is happening to strengthen health systems and solutions created by local communities. These are stories many times do not make to the **mainstream media** outlets, but making **a real difference in the lives of people**.

Ladies and gentlemen,

So, come and join us, and it will be an opportunity to exchange diverse viewpoints, perspectives and experiences on a range of public health topics.

It will be an occasion to witness partnerships at work, and efforts put in place to promote better policy and decision-making and mobilization of commitments for the health sector. You will also have plenty of opportunities and openings to develop additional partnerships and cooperation to address the ever growing public health challenges.

In closing, I would once again like to thank our host, and for the rest of the public health community, we look forward to sharing our plans and expectations as we continue to prepare for the Congress. Your views and collaboration will be valuable to us in the coming years and we count on your cooperation to tap your experience and expertise.

I wish you every success as you continue to serve those who are in need of help and I will end my remark by saying it has been a week well spent and pleasure working with all of you.

Thank you.