



World Health Summit Regional Meeting-Asia, Singapore 2013: The M8 Alliance Statement

No country can be successful without a healthy population. Health is intimately linked to social well-being, stability, productivity, and economic development. However, healthcare models are faced with escalating costs and new solutions must be explored. For long-term success and sustainability, political commitment by governments as well as a whole-of-society approach is required.

Asian countries are facing unprecedented health challenges that can impact sustainable development. At the same time, there is evidence that differences in genotypes and their interactions with specific environments can result in differing phenotypes, which affect disease management in different populations. Examples of this include the rapidly rising incidence of diabetes in Asia in people who are not obese, the high incidence of vascular dementia, and the high occurrence of lung cancer in non-smokers. As such, Asia has to do its own research to contextualize healthcare solutions.

To address these issues, health professionals, academics, civil society, industry, media, and policymakers have gathered in Singapore for the first Regional Meeting of the World Health Summit this 8th to 10th April 2013. The theme for the meeting – “**Health for Sustainable Development in Asia**” – acknowledges that a healthy population is the basis for development, security, progress, social justice, and economic stability.

In formulating this Statement, the underlying values were:

- **Equity:** Access to healthcare should be equal and fair.
- **Ethics:** Health issues should be addressed in an ethical manner at all levels: policy, research, and patient-care.
- **Social Justice:** Health policies should respect the dignity and rights of each human being.
- **Consensus and Inclusiveness:** Health systems should be comprehensive and cover all members of society.
- **Accountability and transparency:** Health policy-makers and healthcare professionals are accountable to those they serve and should design their activities accordingly.
- **Responsiveness, Urgency and Adaptability:** Health policies should be proactive and keep pace with the fast-changing, globally interconnected world we live in.
- **Sustainability:** Healthcare innovations in all areas must be sustainable in the long term and not be dependent on unpredictable external support or unfeasible economic models.

Concluding the discussions during the World Health Summit Regional Meeting – Asia, the M8 Alliance issues the following calls to action:

1. The Impact of Health on Asian Economies

- Disease affects individual lives as well as the well-being of society. It places a significant burden on economies and the sustainable development of nations. We therefore recommend and reinforce that **health and healthcare considerations form an integral part of government policy.**
- To ensure sustainable development, **strategies to promote and protect health** must be prioritized. We call on governmental agencies as well as private and non-profit sectors to play an active role in a whole-of-society approach to develop and implement strategies which promote

health, prevent onset of diseases, and increase the resilience of populations.

- The current trend of healthcare worker migration from less developed to more developed nations is a global phenomenon. We urge governments and international organisations to **develop policies to ensure a sustainable health workforce** within countries with fragile health systems.

2. Innovations in Health in Asia – a holistic, integrated and out-of-the box approach

- Unprecedented advances have been made in **life sciences technologies** in the past three decades. We encourage the development and careful evaluation of these new technologies in patient and population settings. Rigorous cost-effectiveness and cost-benefit analyses must be performed in the relevant context before implementation.

- At the same time, rising healthcare costs are not sustainable. **Innovations in health interventions should be affordable, accessible and beneficial to all**, including disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Frugal innovations, social entrepreneurship, and innovative philanthropy should be promoted and encouraged as ways to make interventions available to all.

- Issues surrounding regulatory capacity and lack of harmonization in **drugs and device regulation** are inhibiting rapid development of needed medicines and devices. We urge governments to strengthen national regulatory capacity and work towards better harmonization of regulatory processes.

- Innovations should be based on sound, contextualised evidence. With the support of governments, industry and innovative philanthropy, **research networks** should be promoted especially for emerging health threats in Asia.

3. Financing Healthcare

- Healthcare should be accessible to everyone. We advocate the principles of **universal health coverage**, which should be regularly reviewed as to whether it is achieving its goals, and whether it is financially sustainable.

- Market failures and inequities continue to exist in both availability and access to needed medicines. We urge the private and public sectors to work together to implement innovative financing approaches to **make medicines and healthcare more affordable and accessible** to those in greatest need and with the least power to pay.

- Health systems are at various stages of development in Asia. Given the importance of a healthy population, we believe that the more developed nations could help the less developed with **technical assistance and strengthening capacity**, which would benefit the entire region.

4. Emerging Health Threats in Asia

- We note that **non-communicable diseases (NCDs), especially cancer, cardiovascular, metabolic, and neurological disease, and mental health conditions** are the leading causes of ill health and death in Asia, and will claim the lives of an estimated 52 million people globally by 2030. NCDs are exacerbated by ageing populations, changing lifestyles as a result of globalization and urbanization, consumption of unhealthy food and beverages, and the continued and heavy use of tobacco. The accelerated pace of economic development and socio-cultural changes in Asia are also creating unprecedented demands on health systems, especially in **caring for the aged**.

- It is increasingly recognized that **maternal and early childhood health and nutrition may be linked to the long-term health of individuals and their predisposition to NCDs**. Approximately 195 million children under the age of 5 in developing countries suffer from growth restriction when the mother is undernourished. Investment in maternal and early childhood health and nutrition should be undertaken with the view of improving the long term well-being of nations.

- Countries should anticipate the continued and increasing threat of **emerging infectious diseases and anti-microbial resistance**. We urge governments to continue surveillance efforts and build response capacity.

We strongly **support the World Health Assembly's call for a 25% reduction in relative mortality from non-communicable diseases by 2025**, also known as the 25 by 25 goal. This will require (1) resources, (2) advocacy, (3) the formation of effective partnerships, and (4) political leadership. This Summit is a significant step forward in turning these strategies into effective actions.