

Short Communication

Good Planning and Great Teamwork Contributed to a Successful 69th WHO RC

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For the first time in the history, the President and the Prime-minister of a country, along with all Health Ministers in the Region, DGs and DDGs of WHO and RD-SEARO took part in a Regional Committee meeting of WHO. This historic event was the 69th WHO (World Health Organization) Regional committee meeting held from 5th to 9th September 2016 in Colombo Sri Lanka.

Sri Lanka proposed that they will hold the 69th RC in Sri Lanka at the High Level preparatory (HLP) meeting for the 68th Session of the WHO SEA Regional Committee WHO/SEARO, held in July 2015. Management Development and Planning Unit (MDPU) of the Ministry of Health Sri Lanka started the process of planning for the prestigious event under the leadership of the Minister of Health Dr Rajitha Senarathne, with the contribution of all Ministry officials. Later many more stakeholders from all relevant Ministries and departments were added to accommodate the reception and direction of state guests to the Inauguration venue, to the Committee meeting venue (Galle Face, Colombo), to the State Dinners of the President and the Health Minister and the field trip to Kandy which showcased the success of Primary Healthcare in Sri Lanka as well as the steps taken to face Non-Communicable diseases. Two Global Health Diplomacy trainings arranged by the MDPU with the facilitation of the WHO country office for the organizing committee resourced by two high Geneva officials helped in the technical processes.¹

A breathtaking and meticulously planned inauguration ceremony at Nelm Pokuna Colombo was attended by the Prime Minister of Sri Lanka, Mr Ranil Wickramasinghe, WHO

Director General, Dr Margaret Chan; WHO South-East Asia Regional Director, Dr Poonam Khetrapal Singh; other WHO experts and senior officials from health ministries of member countries.

A novel addition to the Regional Committee meeting was the morning exercise program. The first program was led by the President of Sri Lanka with the Health minister; the next was a Yoga program by the Minister of Health India and Thailand exercise program followed.²

In this RC; the President of Sri Lanka, HE Maithripala Sirisena, and the Ministry of Public Health of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea were conferred Excellence in Public Health awards by WHO South-East Asia Region for their remarkable and sustained role in the public health gains of their countries. Eliminating maternal and neonatal tetanus from the region and elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis in Thailand, elimination of lymphatic filariasis in Maldives and Sri Lanka, yaws in India; and malaria in Maldives and Sri Lanka were also felicitated at this Regional Committee meeting.³

REFERENCES

1. <http://www.searo.who.int/mediacentre/events/governance/rc/69/en/>
2. <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/events/2016/regional/en/>
3. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYzavz9KoZ4&feature=youtu.be>

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