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Members of the General Assembly, colleagues, guests and our hosts the Medical Association of Thailand.

I am honored to serve as President of the World Medical Association.

And as I think about working with the incredibly dedicated members of this profession, this noble profession of medicine, I am enthusiastic and optimistic about the future.

As I work with colleagues around the globe, I am reminded of the commitment we all have to the profession of medicine.

I am reminded of the similarity of the challenges we face regardless of our country of origin.

Reminded, that there are different ways to respond to those challenges – each of which has its own value.

Most of us went to medical school because of the desire to serve

The allure of science and, yes

The thrill of achievement –

Of doing the difficult –

The hard stuff.

Of running the fastest mile, sinking the hole in one, pole-vaulting higher than any other.

In my country its major league baseball's Josh Hamilton of the Texas Rangers hitting

3. The threat of climate change

First ethics

As physicians we must have moral authority and speak and act with moral authority.

That means we must speak out on broad public health issues.

We are most credible when we speak from a platform based on principle and ethics.

Those physicians from around the world who came together to form the World Medical Association in 1947 recognized this.

They understood that an organization was needed to become the authoritative voice on global standards for medical ethics and professional conduct, rather than focusing solely on protecting the interests of the profession.

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Most recently speaking out urging the government of Bahrain to overturn the criminal court verdict of doctors sentenced to jail for providing care to the injured, and

Calling on the government of Syria and President Assad to protect health care facilities and their workers from interference, intimidation or attack.

And earlier this year, sending our president Dr. deAmaral and chair of council Dr. Haikerwal

It is a job for all of society - world governments, national medical associations, medical schools, patients and yes - individual physicians working in their communities seeking to affect health policy.

But, life style behaviors, smoking, obesity and alcohol abuse are only part of the story of NCDs.

To get there let me digress.

In many societies, unhealthy behaviors are higher in people on the lower end of the social gradient.

The lower they are in the socioeconomic hierarchy the more they smoke, the worse their diet and the less physical activity they engage in –

Putting them at increased risk of noncommunicable disease.

Lower levels of education have the same effect.

We are indebted to the work of Council member Sir Michael Marmot and his colleagues for giving understanding and international visibility to this important subject.

For governments, understanding this concept means that all policies need to be evaluated as to their effects on the health of its citizens.

Therefore, not just one designated minister of health.

All ministers are health ministers.

And the medical profession has a valuable role to play in seeking action on these social conditions, the causes of the causes that have such important effects on health.

My third point

Global warming with its accompanying climate change, and its accompanying extremes of weather is already having and will continue to have significant health effects.

Although governments and international organizations have the main responsibility for creating regulations and legislation to mitigate the effects of climate change the WMA feels an obligation to highlight the health consequences and suggest solutions.

Worldwide the effect may be mixed for Malaria.

In some regions the geographical range will contract and in others expand;

Worldwide disruption of the food supply is predicted to increase malnutrition and subsequent disorders.

Physicians have a role to play to:

Encourage advocacy for environmental protection, reduction of green house gas production and sustainable development of green adaptation practices.

Work with others to educate the general public about the important effects of climate change on health and the need to mitigate climate change and adapt to its effects.

Work with others, including governments, to address the gaps in research regarding climate change and health.

All of which brings to mind an ancient Chinese proverb:

“When is the best time to plant a tree,” asks a young student, sitting in the hot sun with his teacher.

“Twenty years ago,” replies the teacher.

The young boy, feeling a drop of sweat run down his cheek asks,

“Well, then when is the second best time?”

“Now!!” intoned the teacher.

Now

Now is the time.

Fifty years ago – doesn’t seem that long - US President John F. Kennedy gave a speech at Rice University in Houston.

Kennedy spoke of the conquest not only of physical and technological barriers, but psychological ones.

He said:

“We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard.

Because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills.

Because that challenge is one we are willing to accept,

A challenge we are unwilling to postpone.

And one we intend to win.”

Ethics,

Non-communicable disease,

Climate change.

So, is the job difficult?

Yes.

On the contrary, if I have the belief that I can do it, I shall surely acquire the capacity to do it even if I may not have it at the beginning.”

As physicians, we are joined by our common contract with humanity.

We reach out to the sick, the disabled and the chronically ill.

Suffering knows no language, and easing pain, finding treatments, developing cures – know no borders.

Working together we can create the future of medicine.

Together, we can open new doors, share new insights, find new cures, prevent disease and help our patients the world over to live healthier, happier, longer, more productive lives.

I look forward to that.

Thank you.