

**Opening remarks by Dr. Myint Htwe, Union Minister for Health and Sports, at the 13th
Myanmar Obstetrical & Gynecological Congress**

Hotel Max Novotel, Yangon,

23th February 2019

- Dear President of the Asia and Oceania Federation of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Professors of Obstetrics & Gynecology from our country and abroad,
- Patrons, President and Executive Committee Members of Myanmar Obstetrical and Gynecological Society of Myanmar Medical Association,
- Permanent Secretaries, Directors-General, Rectors, Medical Superintendents, Professors of Obstetrics & Gynecology from Universities of Medicine across our country,
- Obstetricians and Gynecologists from our country, Distinguished Delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen,
- It is my distinct privilege and honor to deliver the opening remarks at the 13th Myanmar Obstetrical & Gynecological Congress, which is held every alternate year.
- Firstly, I would like to congratulate the President and Executive Committee members for making this congress a reality.
- The role of Obstetricians and Gynecologists is really crucial for Myanmar as our maternal morbidity and mortality is still at an unacceptably high level, although the trend is decreasing. We need to make this decreasing trend a steeper one.
- We also noticed that the causes of maternal mortality are also very much related to factors beyond the control of MoHS.
- One major factor is level of health literacy among women population living in rural and hard to reach areas. It is somewhat low in terms of knowledge on Obstetrics and Gynecology issues.

- The MoHS is now distributing tablet phones to all our basic health professionals, about 20,000 to improve the health literacy level of our population.
- My strong notion is that “progress of population health is directly proportional to the health literacy level of the population”.
- I just want to cite one example, early signs and symptoms of Cancer Cervix are not known clearly by our women population living in remote and hard-to-reach areas. They came very late to get treatment services.
- We therefore need to use axe instead of pins, as per the sayings in Myanmar and the outcome may not be that good.
- Whatever the case may be, we need stronger and proactive collaboration between Obstetrics and Gynecology domain and public health domain to reduce maternal mortality in our country.
- I am proud and glad to mention that Obstetricians and Gynecologists in our country are not only closely involved in developing several Guidelines and Standard Operational Procedures in the field of midwifery and nursing disciplines but also in practical teachings at fifty or so nursing and midwifery schools and two nursing universities.
- Specifically, the Society is involved in production of a vast array of documents and also conducted numerous training activities, which I appreciate very much.
- I am also thinking of forming a special Technical Advisory Group consisting of Obstetricians and Gynecologists and public health professionals for improving, especially, the midwifery domain.
- The reason being that midwives are first line care givers for the health of mothers and children in rural and hard-to-reach areas, where doctors are not available.
- If our clinical and obstetrics acumen of our midwives are at a reasonably acceptable

level, we can reduce maternal mortality to a significant level. For that matter, MoHS will closely collaborate with Myanmar Society of Obstetricians and Gynecologists in the coming months for improving the obstetrics acumen of our midwives.

- As I have alluded to earlier, we are providing tablet phones to our midwives and almost all will receive it in about four-month time. The tablet is like carrying a library in their hands.
- It includes all Guidelines and Standard Operational Procedures produced by MoHS for public health and medical care domain. It also includes safe delivery application and three hundred and thirty pages standardized health messages book, apart from containing numerous information. Continuing Midwifery Education and Continuing Professional Development for midwives will be conducted through these tablet phones.

Dear Obstetricians and Gynecologists,

- This congress, like any other annual congresses or conferences of other disciplines, is an excellent platform for exchange of knowledge and sharing state-of-the-art techniques in the field of Obstetrics and Gynecology.
- In that context, I would urge my upcoming young Obstetricians and Gynecologists to get the most out of this congress.
- I am confident that personal as well as institutional level networks will get strengthened. This can lead to several initiatives such as evolvement of multi-centric research projects among institutions within and outside the country.
- When I quickly went through the program of the congress, I noticed that we had pre-congress workshop on
 - Uro-gynecology led by the Australian team,
 - Laparoscopy with live surgery led by the Japanese team, together with a

symposium on pre-invasive lesions of the cervix led by the Korean team.

- I would appreciate and like to thank the professionals who conducted these pre-congress workshop and symposium.
- My special appreciation to the organizing committee members who spearheaded this agenda.
- We need to do more like this in our country under the leadership of Obstetrical & Gynecological Society of Myanmar Medical Association and Obstetrics and Gynecology professors of our medical universities. This can rekindle and expose the hidden talents of our upcoming Obstetricians and Gynecologists in our country.
- To my satisfaction, the agenda of the congress also cover a wide spectrum of topics in the field of Obstetrics and Gynecology domain.
- I am sure that the organizing committee will also record and videotape all the presentations and discussion points made during the congress for distributing to all Obstetricians and Gynecologists, who could not attend it due to their pressing clinical and administrative duties.

Dear Obstetricians and Gynecologists,

- I am also delighted to mention that this Obstetrical and Gynecological Society had evolved since the inception of Myanmar Medical Association (MMA). In other words, this is one of the oldest societies among all societies of MMA.
- The society plays a very crucial and unequivocal role in improving the health and welfare of mothers and children of our country.
- Three prominent Obstetricians and Gynecologists had also served as Presidents of Myanmar Medical Association, who happened to be my teachers also when I was final MBBS medical student in the early seventies.
- They are excellent and devoted teachers who could explain and transform

complicated topics into simplified ones. My full respect goes to all of them, as always.

- I can still vividly recall those indelible memories in the Obstetrics and Gynecology wards of Central Women's Hospital in Yangon while I was studying as a medical student and Defense Services General Hospital as a house surgeon respectively.
- Dear Obstetricians and Gynecologists,
- It is to be noted that "Obstetrics and Gynecology workforce is essential to achieve UHC on our path to SDGs". In other words, Obstetricians and Gynecologists should be part and parcel of our health team to achieve SDG.
- While appreciating the clinical contents of the agenda of the congress, it would be beneficial if we could include a few topics such as "Role of Obstetricians and Gynecologists in primary health care settings to achieve SDG", "Improving the research acumen or research thinking skill of Obstetricians and Gynecologists", "Evidence-based thinking skill of Obstetricians and Gynecologists in managing patients", "Ethical perspectives of Obstetrics and Gynecology while serving the population at large".
- The reason being that I do not want Obstetricians and Gynecologists to confine their work to hospital settings. You may wish to include these topics in your future meetings or workshops of the Society.
- Upscaling high quality obstetrical interventions continues to be part of the response to new SDG of eliminating preventable maternal and early neonatal mortality.
- This is very much in line with the theme of the key note lecture which is "Ensuring safe practice in Obstetrics and Gynecology".
- Several studies had shown that investing in improving access to safe reproductive health care, including family planning and abortion, when coupled with obstetrics

surgical care is very cost effective in reducing maternal mortality.

- I would urge the Myanmar Obstetrical and Gynecological Society to look above and beyond the horizon of clinical topics because it has great potential to play a key role in promoting national policies, establishing national standards, developing quality assurance and outcome measures and monitoring health care indicators.
- While we are going for clinical excellence, we should not forget the importance of public health as Myanmar is a developing country.
- The role of public health in the field of Obstetrics and Gynecology is crucial for reducing the quantum of patient load. The analogy is like a water tank where we need to reduce or restrict the inflow of water or patients into the tank.
- Clinical domain will take care of the amount of water or patients coming out from the tank.
- It would be very cost effective in any health care delivery system if we can reduce the inflow of patients like an analogy of water coming into the tank.
- Otherwise, it would become a never ending business and major chunk of the government budget will unnecessarily be consumed for treating patients in future years.
- If Obstetricians and Gynecologists can have some positive inclination or accord importance towards the public health domain, we would be more than happy. Because patients will listen more to words by Obstetricians and Gynecologists as they are in receptive modes while in hospitals.

In conclusion,

- I would like to say that this congress will definitely strengthen the knowledge base as well as expand the knowledge horizon of Obstetrics and Gynecology domain.
- The rate of development and progress in the field of Obstetricians and Gynecology is

far faster nowadays compared to that of the last century.

- We need to keep abreast of the development and this congress is one of the best avenues through which we can attain it.
 - I hope that our young generation of Obstetricians and Gynecologists in my country will benefit tremendously by attending the congress so that they can serve our women population with quality care.
 - They will be also equipped with state-of-the-art techniques and information. One take home message to our upcoming Obstetricians and Gynecologists in my country is to conduct more research and MoHS can financially support to a certain and reasonable extent. It is only through evidence based findings that we can excel in the field of Obstetrics and Gynecology.
 - Our senior Obstetricians and Gynecologists can explore with outside research and health institutions for conducting multi-centric collaborative research projects.
 - I wish the congress a very successful one and achieve its intended objectives fully.
- Thank you.