

**Opening Remarks by HE. Dr. Myint Htwe,
Union Minister, Ministry of Health and Sports, Myanmar
at the 4th SEARAME Conference, 2016**

Novotel Hotel

Yangon

17-11-2016

Good morning! Mingalarbar!

Professor Myo Thwe our chief guest, Professor David Gordon, President of World Federation for Medical Education (WFME), Professor Dr. Rita Sood, President of SEARAME, eminent local and international resource persons, WHO representative to Myanmar, Directors-General and Deputy Directors-General from MoHS, SEARAME and MSME Executive Committee members, all my sayas and colleagues, Rectors from the Medical and allied Health Universities, local and international speakers, distinguished guests, participants, ladies and gentlemen,

It is indeed a great honour for Myanmar to host the 4th SEARAME conference organized by the Department of Human Resource for Health, Ministry of Health and Sports with the theme “Optimizing Paradigm Shifts in Health Professions Education” together with the “First National Conference of the Myanmar Society of Medical Educationists”

On this auspicious inaugural ceremony, I would like to extend a very warm welcome to all of you, particularly delegates from all over the world who had come from far and near, to share their expertise in the field of health professions education.

It is heartening to know that in addition to the pre-conference workshop, the conference will highlight various aspects of medical education in the form of keynote addresses, symposia, oral communications, roundtable discussions, plenaries, a Medical Education Clinic where participants can clarify those aspects they are not

clear about with international experts, interactive forums, and a summit on “Accreditation of Medical Schools” with speakers sharing their countries’ experiences.

I am sure that these interactive discussions will lead to a medical education “treasure trove”. It is somewhat like an “oasis” for young medical educationists in our region and beyond.

Many innovative ideas, creative thinking and newer concepts will definitely stimulate not only to the medical educationists but also to faculty members of various schools and universities in many countries.

On behalf of the MoHS, I can pledge that we will give serious attention for utilizing / applying these “shared experiences” or “new thinking” and possibly “new concepts and innovative ideas” in our roadmap to improve the field of medical education domain in our country.

Each university, be it medical or nursing or pharmacy or medical technology or traditional medicine, will appropriately refer or apply in formulating respective plans for change or for quality improvement to suit the current demand of the situation.

Although our clinicians and health care providers continue to excel in their respective domain of work, they should not forget the importance of keeping abreast with the technological advances of medical and health professional education in order to pave a well established way for our future generation of professionals.

I regard medical education or medical education system as a “stem of the tree”. Only if the stem is strong and deeply rooted, the branches and leaves of the tree will be healthy, robust and green. The branches and leaves is our products, i.e., doctors or nurses or medical technologists or pharmacists, etc. Medical education is the biggest

investment to any country to make and it is the best investment from long term perspective.

For us to have good and quality graduates, the curriculum and enabling teaching environment are important. However, what is more important, I thought, is the teaching methods together with appropriate mix of student as well as faculty assessment methods or procedures and institution accreditation.

I am expecting that this Conference will yield many practical, doable, down-to-earth ideas and views for all of us to pay undivided attention. The reason being that all the presenters are well experienced with the medical education domain. I would like to also thank them for giving time to attend this 4th SEARAME Conference.

I would also like to mention that we should give serious attention to various approaches and avenues as to how we should improve the capacity and capability of faculty members of various universities and schools. Generally, we tend to forget and that we assume faculty members know more than students. In fact, this is not the case in the age of advanced ICT and wide availability of internet. I also noticed that there is one topic titled “Faculty development to facilitate the paradigm shifts in curriculum delivery”. You might aware that paradigm shift is always in a state of flux. We have to adjust our way of work or our way of teaching as per the demand of the changing scenario. The analogy is that “In disease control, we have to align our nature of work depending on the changing epidemiological situation”.

What I am deriving at is that many of the basic public health principles or epidemiologic principles can be applied even in the field of medical education.

As a developing country like Myanmar and nearby countries, we need to incorporate country specific research or case studies in the field of medical education. The

medical education situation in each country is not the same; even two countries or three countries within the same category of developing countries are not the same. Therefore, we need to strategize how to regularly conduct case studies or case reviews in the country. It should be the order of the day. Sufficient funding to conduct the studies must also be allocated and it is also important to ensure that findings must be considered or applied also.

I should be frank in saying that we in Myanmar have not given enough attention to medical education principles, methods and approaches as it should have been. During my tenure as the Union Minister of Health and Sports, I will give special attention to this without reservation.

Having said that, we will strengthen the Central Medical Education unit in UM(1) and also consider reviewing or establishing small Medical Education units in all other Universities and Schools. These units will be working in tandem through coordination of central Medical Education unit.

We will also update and fine tune our medical education policy and strategies in the coming months. For this we need support and help from the WFME and SEARAME.

I am extremely glad that the Conference will be delving into the transformative learning, accreditation, assessment, continuing professional development including professionalism. These are really the building blocks in the field of Medical Education.

I want to emphasize one point i.e., networking, which is the key to strengthen all the nodal points or parties included in the network. Myanmar will go all-out to achieve to this end. The caveat is that we need to respect the mission and vision statements of each party.

I am sure all medical educationists in my country will agree to the idea of having effective, efficient and dynamic networking with neighboring countries through the axis of SEARAME and WFME. I am sure SEARAME and WFME will give a helping hand to achieve our common objective of improving the Medical Education domain.

I have also noticed that many of the presenters are world renowned and region renowned medical educationists. It is a great opportunity for Myanmar young medical educationists to learn state-of-the-art knowledge / thinking / ideas of these professionals coming from all over the world. I would urge our young medical educationists to make the most out of this Conference.

By looking at the agenda of the Conference, our young medical educationists will realize the wide spectrum of topics which are generally subsumed under the rubric of medical education. They will also discern the breadth and depth of each specific topic under the sub-domain of medical education.

I would expect that more professionals in my country will show inclination or interest towards the medical education domain which will be an added advantage or asset to our country.

I am also of the opinion that this Conference will serve as a catalyst or new ideas will be hatching so that Myanmar Medical Education system will be moving ahead with full momentum for the benefit of our young students. Ultimately, it is for the population at large. i.e., population will be getting quality care with professionalism as an “inherent characteristics” of our faculty members or teachers or medical professionals.

It would not be complete if I do not touch the Medical Councils’ aspect. We have a network of Medical Councils initiated by WHO SEARO. We need to revive this

network and make it very strong and robust. We plan or will be hosting the next or future Medical Council meeting in my country. I am calling for WHO to give full support in this endeavor.

While we continue to improve medical and health professions education and training system to nurture clinically competent doctors and other health care professionals, there is something which is equally as important as medical education, that we need to internalize. This is the practice of morals, ethics and professionalism with sincerity, honesty and humility. Therefore in Myanmar, starting this year, we have given special attention to teaching of medical ethics, starting from 1st MBBS Junior to final MBBS Part II using case scenarios and case studies. It is hoped that through this approach, we may be getting, ethically minded, professionally competent and fully committed graduates who would devote to the population they are going to serve.

Through our theme of the Conference “Optimizing Paradigm Shift in Health Professions Education” for the 2016, 4th SEARAME Conference, it would be an opportune moment to pool our knowledge, share our experiences and expertise for effective education of our health care professionals in the country, region and beyond.

Before I conclude, I appreciate and very much thankful to the local organizing committee, subcommittees and secretariat for their untiring effort in doing preparatory works for the Conference. I would not be fulfilling my duty, if I am not relaying “a big thank you note” to WFME and SEARAME and also to the international, and local resource persons.

Last but not the least, I wish the Conference to have a very fruitful outcome.

Thank you very much.