

**VALEDICTORY SPEECH  
OF WMA PRESIDENT 2010-2011  
Dr. Wonchat SUBHACHATURAS M.D.  
WMA GENERAL ASSEMBLY, MONTEVIDEO 2011  
MONTEVIDEO, URUGUAY  
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Mr. Chair, Co-chairs, Executive Committee, Secretary General, Presidents and delegates from constituent member associations, colleagues and friends, ladies and gentlemen

During the year of my Presidency, since October 16, 2010, there have been a lot of events ongoing on this planet. Natural disasters hit several places—from Chile, Christchurch, Yunnan and, the worst of the year, was the earthquake of the city of Miyaki, Sendai, Japan, which killed thousands, devastated the city, and led to the subsequent leakage of radiation from the power plants. It was not just the natural disasters but also the man-made disasters that superimposed and worsened the situations. The political conflicts around the Mediterranean created and agitated the instability of the medical and health professions. Many health personnel were unethically and unjustifiably persecuted. Many of them were injured, tortured, punished, and jailed. This is unfair to the health and medical personnel who do their jobs for humanity—a job that must be recognized worldwide both in peace and in war.

During my past 12 months, I have had the honour of being invited as the President and representative from WMA to visit and deliver speeches in many countries, at special occasions such as annual meetings of the Medical Associations and Medical Forums on five continents. The only continent that I did not have the opportunity to visit was Africa.

The list of my Presidential visits include:

1. Jiang yin, China, November 26-27, 2010: International Biomedicine and technology & Health Care Summit
2. Taipei, Taiwan, November 11-14, 2010: Annual General Assembly of the TMA and Doctor's Day
3. Hong Kong, December 29, 2010- Jan 2, 2011: Annual General Assembly of the HK MA and the New Year Celebration
4. Bangkok, Thailand, January 25-29, 2011: Global Health Workforce Alliance
5. New Delhi, India, February 14-17, 2011: SEARO Experts Consultation on Doctor-Patient Relationship
6. Tokyo, Japan, March 2-4, 2011: Task Shifting
7. New Delhi, India, March 16-18, 2011: Partners for Health in South East Asia
8. Sydney, Australia, April 3-10, 2011: WMA 188<sup>th</sup>. Council Meeting
9. Geneva, Switzerland, May 13-18, 2011: WHPA Assembly
10. Oslo, Norway, May, 24-27, 2011: Annual General Assembly of the Norwegian Medical Association

11. Kiel, Germany, May 29-June 3, 2011: Annual General Assembly of the German Medical Association
12. Chicago, USA, June 16-21, 2011: Annual General Assembly of the AMA:
13. Brussels, Belgium, June 22-25, 2011: EFMA Congress
14. Cardiff, England, June 26-29, 2011: Annual Representative Meeting or ARM General Assembly of the BMA
15. Taipei, Taiwan, June 30- July 2, 2011: Workshop on Counterfeit Medicine
16. Sao Paulo, Brazil, July 11-16, 2011: Placebo Meeting
17. Beijing, China, August 7-8, 2011: Organ Transplant
18. Nesebar, Bulgaria, September 5-12, 2011: SEEMF 2<sup>nd</sup> Congress
19. New York, USA, September 17-22, 2011: General Assembly High-level Meeting on NCD
20. And the last trip for my Presidency would be at this time, the WMA General Assembly in Montevideo, Uruguay, October 9-16, 2011.

As Immediate Past President, I plan to attend as a representative from the WMA the Social Determinants Meeting in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on October, 19-21, 2011, and the Global Alcohol Policy Conference in Bangkok, Thailand on November 28-30, 2011.

I do apologize to those NMAs and organizations who sent me invitations but, due to scheduling conflicts, I could not attend.

### **Achievements**

First and most important: I had partly fulfilled my wish and policy to connect with people and to meet with our members, as the time allowed. I encouraged them in the areas of medical ethics and professional collaboration, and empowered them to work for the community with the heart and soul of the medical profession as a representative of the World Medical Association. During my visits, I also had the opportunity to learn a lot from their views and policies. Some are similar and some are different, depending on their cultural and economic context, but they can be bonded together.

Second: On many occasions, I promoted statements the WMA had produced, either independently or in collaboration with our partners and allies, to protect health and medical professionals from illegal, unethical or unjust treatment, such as in Iran, Bahrain etc.

Third: I had the opportunity to encourage our member states and countries for the unity of our profession, which I think is most important and essential to create the close relationships and ties necessary for the international collaboration and sharing of the medical and health information. This will give us a stronger voice in the global community.

### **Challenges**

1. There were still barriers and political conflicts amongst states and countries and on many occasions the provision of health care was impeded and our medical and health profession affected.
2. The economic crisis that remained for the period of my term was a great barrier to the development of medical care in many countries.

3. Apart from the natural disasters that happened around the world and killed thousands of people, and a devastated economy, there were also several man-made disasters, especially around the Mediterranean, that cost a lot of lives.

### **What is my concern?**

The provision of Health care is the ultimate goal of all health and medical personnel, but it could not be achieved if we don't have:

1. Professional Unity
2. Ethical Practice
3. Equitable provision of health care
4. Global collaboration within our profession and with the allied health professions, without discrimination due to race, nationality, colour, beliefs, religion, and gender.
5. Care for our younger generation
6. Independence from politics
7. Professional social responsibility
8. The medical profession needs to be sincere and trustworthy. Medical practice is a science that must be evidence-based, transparent, reasonable, politically neutral, patient-targeted, and no boundaries in between. False or non-evidenced allegations toward each other is an important mean of tearing us apart.

I must say that all of the medical associations and the forum organizers in cities and countries I visited gave me courage and the opportunity to do what I said I would do when I was sworn into this position—connecting people for the unity of WMA. I feel grateful for that. Furthermore they showed great hospitality and generosity to me while I was staying with them. People working behind the scenes and making my travels possible and comfortable whom I must mention here are so many, including our Secretary General, Dr. Otmar Kloiber, who has always been my advisor and consultant. Also, there are many people at the Secretariat office in Ferney-Voltaire who assisted with my communication and travels—Sunny, Clarisse, Anna, Julia, Lamine, Nigel, and many more. They deserve my sincere thanks.

I must also thank to all the leaders of the WMA including our Immediate Past President Dr. Dana Hansen, our President Elect, Dr. José Luiz Gomez do Amaral, Immediate Past Chair of the Council, Dr. Edward Hill, our current Chair of the Council, Dr. Mukesh Haikerwal, and our Past President from Korea, Dr. Tai Joon Moon, all of whom have given great support and encouraged me always during my term.

I would like to cordially thanks to my colleagues at the Medical Association of Thailand (MAT): the President, Police Lt. Gen. Dr. Jongjate Aoajnepong, CEO and Past President of the MAT, Prof. Dr. Somsri Pausawasdi, Secretary General of the MAT, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Prasert Sarnvivad and the Executive Committee Members of the MAT who have given me the time away from my responsibility at the MAT to work for the WMA.

Most of all, I greatly thank, my wife, Professor Dr. Prapaipan Subhachaturas, Deputy Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, Rangsit University, in Thailand, and my family who always encouraged me to do the job and took care of business at home while I was away, almost one half of the year.