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Welcome Address

By

Vijay Menon
Welcome Address by the Secretary-General of AMIC, Mr. Vijay Menon, at the inauguration of the WHO-UNESCO-IPDC-AMIC Roundtable on "Health Education Needs the Media", Singapore, June 20-22, 1984

Chief Guest, Mr. Wan Hussin Zoohri, H.E. Ambassador Reyes, distinguished co-sponsors and participants, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of AMIC, it gives me great pleasure to welcome all of you to the inauguration of the Roundtable on Health Education Needs the Media.

While health is a matter of fundamental and critical concern, it is not always deemed newsworthy. But just as media persons need good health, so does the cause of health and nutrition require the power and the persuasion of the media.

We at AMIC are happy that we have helped to organise this Roundtable in Singapore for the benefit of the region. We believe that communication media must strive to serve the community. We have, so far, organised two seminars on the subject of Social Marketing: the first in Bali two years ago and the second in Kuala Lumpur last year. Both these seminars underscored the urgent and compelling need for fully and effectively utilising the communication skills and sources in the region for promoting causes of concern to the community.

The countries of Asean, as indeed of all Asia, are engaged in the stupendous task of developing their human resources. Health care, it is recognised, is a necessary precondition for human resource development. This means providing "preventive and curative services that are active, accessible, affordable and acceptable for the population".

The key word is 'acceptance'. It is recognised today that any activity which affects the community, however beneficial, must have the support of the people. Progressive programmes are not always perceived as such and well-intentioned efforts often fail for lack of popular support. We need to employ the skills and the expertise of the communications practitioner and of the commercial marketer to make socially useful goals acceptable, desirable and,

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therefore, achievable. This is a task that calls for collective effort, a compact between the medical experts and the media for the benefit of the community of which they are a part.

The choice of Singapore for this Roundtable is singularly appropriate. No communications practitioner can fail to be impressed with the excellent support provided by the mass media to the exceptional campaigns for socially beneficial causes. We are glad that the authors of some of these campaigns are with us as participants.

This Roundtable has been made possible by the support, material and moral, of the International Programme for Development of Communication, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Economic, Social and Cultural Organisation. I would like to acknowledge the personal involvement and interest in this project of Mr. Sarath Amunugama, Director, IPDC, Dr. Jack Ling, Director of Public Information and Health Education, the World Health Organization, Dr. Susan van der Vynckt of Unesco and Mr. Ron Israel, Director, International Nutrition Communication Service.

AMIC's involvement in this and other activities is made possible by the generous support of the Government of Singapore and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, an independent foundation in the Federal Republic of Germany. It is gratifying to note that the Ministry of Economic Cooperation of the Federal German Government also supported the evaluation study of human resource development for primary health care carried out by the UNDP.

It is our hope that this Roundtable and the projects that flow from it will have a catalytic effect and serve to stimulate more such activities in the region.

We are grateful to the Parliamentary Secretary, Mr. Wan Hussin Zoohri for inaugurating the Roundtable and to Dr. Kwa and our other guests for giving us the pleasure and the benediction of their presence.