

Your Excellencies the Ministers, Esteemed Guests,

Honorable Representatives of the World of Diplomacy, Politics, Academy and NGOs,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Welcome to our scientific congress titled “Health in Africa”. On behalf of the Organizing Committee, the Federation of Islamic Medical Associations (i.e., FIMA), Hayat Foundation and Istanbul Medeniyet University, I deeply feel the pride and honor of hosting and addressing to such a distinguished audience. Please allow me to welcome you once again to our congress and to Istanbul.

As you all know, poverty manifesting itself throughout history for various reasons in the form of “inadequate production and uneven sharing” has been the gravest problem facing humanity. As a result of the transition from agrarian to industrial society, production capacity of countries has risen to an unprecedented extent. The process of industrialization deeply transformed the cultural, economic and political structures of Western societies in particular. Those who had pioneered this transformation outran those who were somehow left behind in this process, which created a process of “haves and have-nots” that still continues to this day.

While material wealth and luxury is growing ever more around the globe, poverty, on the other hand, has aggravated as a result of the phenomena of liberalization and globalization, which have dominated all economic activity during the last two to three decades. Globalization policies which have exacerbated the inequality and injustice within and among countries have now become the hegemonic order of the world. As for the social phenomena which further deepened this inequality and injustice, they can be exemplified by migration and refugee crisis, disasters, epidemics, war and terror, unemployment, and economic crises.

Although the concept of poverty usually has negative connotations, it would be better not to see it only in the light of tangible criteria and define it as “a lifestyle below hunger/poverty threshold”. For such material deficiencies also have many social repercussions, chiefly the danger of social isolation. This danger presents itself in circumstances whereby individuals or groups are denied access to education, health care and cultural facilities and cannot take part in production and decision-making processes due to unemployment, poverty, lack of education and disability.

“Absolute poverty” is defined as one’s inability to meet his or her food, accommodation and minimum sanitary requirements. Hereby, we would like to draw public attention to lack of health care. Caused by lack of infrastructure and material resources, inadequate organization and supply of health care are major factors that aggravate poverty. Undernourished poor people who are unable to protect themselves against various diseases will certainly be exposed to new permanent diseases.

Today, civil war, famine, poverty and epidemics remind almost everyone of Africa, the second largest Continent on Earth and home to 54 countries and 1 billion 216 million people. Ecological factors, lack of arable land, unfavorable climatic conditions, and lack of potable water all expose this dense population to grave health problems. Every year, in the African continent, 15 million children in the age group zero to five die due to malnourishment and lack of fresh water, while seven million people starve to death. In this part of the world where average life expectancy is 46 years, one out of three people suffer from famine. As for the income level, particularly half of the population in the sub-Saharan Africa fall under the poorest income category earning only one dollar a day.

Millions die in Africa every year of diseases such as malaria, measles, diarrhea, tuberculosis, and pneumonia, which can easily be cured with basic vaccines and medicines in the modern world.

Unfortunately, this aggrieved continent suffering from many other grievances has been treated by the world merely on the basis of politics, strategy and interests. Because of its abundant mineral resources and strategic trade routes, history of Africa has always been a history of exploited territories. Right from the perspective of the Continent itself, this could be interpreted as a series of relations based on exploitation and murder instead of providing development, education, and progress.

In contrast, as a country recently trying to revive its long-established relations with Central and North Africa on the basis of humanitarian values, Turkey embraces her brothers with open arms. So far, we have together achieved considerable progress in various areas from development partnerships to mechanisms of political dialogue, from educational-cultural activities to economic collaboration, and from the improvement of transport facilities to health infrastructure. Ready for solidarity and stronger cooperation, our country has become the leading partner of Africa, particularly in the health sector. We sincerely hope that this

cooperation and solidarity will continue until the very moment when poverty is completely eradicated from the surface of the Continent.

Esteemed guests,

Right at this juncture, this Congress titled “Health in Africa” is intended to strengthen Turco-African relations on the basis of a stabilizing and sustainable context, instead of conjuncture. Thus, the Conference aims to bring together government officials, diplomats, humanitarian volunteers, NGO’s, academics, and philanthropists both from Turkey and African countries.

The Congress has been organized conjointly by the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Turkey, Istanbul Medeniyet University, the Federation of Islamic Medical Associations (i.e., FIMA) and Hayat Health and Social Services Foundation. Thereby, we need to briefly talk about Hayat Health and Social Services Foundation and FIMA, for which we have held the Council Meeting for the last two days and our country now acts as the term president.

Established in 1981, FIMA is an international organization that aims to strengthen the solidarity and collaboration between Muslim healthcare professionals around to world; promote cooperation among its members; promote various activities including medical services, education and research; promote the understanding and practice of Islamic principles and rules in medicine; and encourage exchange of knowledge and experience among member organizations. Currently with 54 member organizations from 45 member countries, FIMA has numerous branches and projects. These involve education, student mobility, social solidarity, academic exchange, humanitarian aid, publications on medical ethics and health.

Likewise, Hayat Health and Social Services Foundation, a member of FIMA since 1996, is a movement consisting of employees and volunteers who aim to embrace all stakeholders in health care and social services; which is concerned with raising conscious generations and sympathizes with those in suffering; and which strives to improve and protect the rights of its target group with social awareness. So far, it has reached thousands of medical students and areas with its activities. It will continue its efforts in the future with stronger focus.

For further information about FIMA and Hayat Foundation, you can refer to the booths in the foyer.

Last but not least, I would like to particularly express our pleasure to host you on this historical occasion in Turkey and Istanbul, the capital of civilizations. Beside the scientific and academic

atmosphere of the congress, throughout your stay in İstanbul, which is the heart of the world, I hope you will fully enjoy the rich history, cultural atmosphere, warm hospitality, marvelous climate, and refreshing social environment of this beautiful city.

My thanks go to all the officials, volunteers, stakeholders and sponsors who took part in and contributed to the long preparation process as well as the actual event to be completed within a few days. I also would like to express my gratitude to our Ministry of Health – in the person of His Excellence the Minister – who have added great value to this event by being a stakeholder as part of our government's vision for Africa. And I sincerely hope that the “Health in Africa” Congress shall prove fruitful and auspicious for our countries and for the entire humanity.

Thank you...