12 April 2005

Invitation to the WHO Conference on the Health Aspects of the
Tsunami Disaster in Asia
Phuket, Thailand, 4-6 May 2005

On behalf of the Director General of WHO, and the Regional Director of WHO Southeast Asia Region, I am pleased to invite you to this major conference that we are organizing, in cooperation with the Royal Thai Government.

The purpose of the conference is twofold: to help strengthen national capabilities for preparedness and response, and to seek improvements in international systems that support national capacity development. The conference objective is to review the experience of health professionals - from government and civil society - as they participated in the initial emergency response to the tsunami and, now, in support for early health system recovery. Through a carefully designed scientific programme, conference participants will examine disaster preparedness and reduction in the health sector, as well as achievements in reducing the risks to health, and adverse health outcomes, faced by affected populations.

The scope of the conference is limited to (a) the specific health outcomes experienced by affected populations, and (b) factors affecting the performance of the health sector in response and recovery. The conference objective will be addressed from two perspectives: national actions, and the contribution of the international assistance community.
I enclose a background note and an outline of the proposed programme. Please also consult the conference website www.who.int/tsunamiconference for updates and additional information. If you would like to discuss any aspect of the conference, please contact, in the first instance, the Conference Hotline via tsunamiconf@who.int, or by telephone: +41.22.791.3844 or fax: +41.22.791.1387, so that we will be able to answer or forward your query to the right person in the Conference Secretariat. For all Technical aspects of the Conference, please contact Dr Mukesh Kapila via kapilam@who.int or by telephone +41 22 791 1984.

Your contribution to the conference would greatly enhance the proceedings, and I do hope that you will be able to attend. In view of the heavy demand for places, and likely pressure on travel and accommodation arrangements, we would appreciate a response on the enclosed response form, as soon as possible, and latest 25 April 2005. Practical details of accommodation and travel will be sent to confirmed participants, and will also be available on the conference webpage.

We look forward to welcoming you in Phuket in early May.

Dr David Nabarro
Representative of the Director-General
For Health Action & Crises