

Speech by Vice Minister of Health Dr. Longde Wang at ceremony to launch  
Global Alliance against Chronic Respiratory Diseases

Distinguished guests, delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

The ceremony to launch the Global Alliance against Chronic Respiratory Diseases is taking place at this time when the feeling of spring is very much in the air here in Beijing. This event is of great significance to promoting the prevention and control of chronic respiratory diseases in our country. First of all, on behalf of the Ministry of Health, I would like to warmly congratulate the convening of this launch ceremony; warmly welcome all domestic and international medical experts and professors participating in this event; and express my sincere gratitude to the World Health Organization which has consistently supported and assisted China in its pursue for health, as well as all domestic and international experts who have made unremitting efforts and positive contributions to prevent and control chronic respiratory diseases.

Chronic respiratory diseases are a kind of common diseases seriously affecting the health of the population. Substantial amounts of health resources are spent on prevention and treatment every year. Such diseases not only have a grave impact on the patient's physical well-being and quality of life, but also impose an enormous financial burden on families and the society. China is a developing country, and the prevalence of chronic respiratory disease is very high. According to incomplete statistics, the number of patients suffering from chronic respiratory diseases is 32 million, the prevalence among the population above the age of 40 being as high as 8.2%; and the number of asthma patients is 39 million.

The Chinese government is paying much attention to the prevention and treatment of chronic respiratory diseases. Under the leadership of the government, proactive prevention and control activities as well as comprehensive management measures have been undertaken, gradually giving shape to a prevention and control network with the integration of government departments, specialized technical forces and the patients. Certain progress has been made in the continuing education of medical workers, the establishment of new cooperative relations between providers and users of health services, and the extension of the range and measures for prevention and control. The percentage of patients seeking care for chronic respiratory diseases is rising by the year, and there has been significant drop in the frequency of some acute asthmatic attacks, the extent of severe damages and medical expenses. Nevertheless, efforts to prevent and control chronic respiratory diseases were initiated at a rather late date in China, and there is a long way to go before we can catch up with advanced international levels. In the future, we will take necessary measures to further strengthen governmental leadership, enhance international communication, draw on successful prevention and control experiences from other countries, initiate well organized and carefully planned health education, mobilize the entire society to give attention and support to the prevention and control of chronic respiratory disease, continuously increase the capability and capacity of medical workers to diagnose and treat chronic respiratory diseases, and make efforts to reduce the socio-economic burden imposed by disease on patients and their families.

The Global Alliance against Chronic Respiratory Diseases will provide an effective form in which health care workers, institutions and governments from all countries may jointly work to mobilize the entire population in efforts to prevent and control chronic respiratory diseases. Holding this ceremony in China to launch the Global Alliance against Respiratory Diseases offers us an excellent learning opportunity to strengthen international academic exchange, carry out research on the prevention and control of chronic respiratory diseases, and improve the level of prevention and control. Over the years, China and WHO have been engaged in productive collaboration in health care. I am convinced that, with the joint efforts of all concerned, we will increasingly make improvements in the prevention and control of chronic respiratory diseases and achieve ever greater success.

Finally, I offer my best wishes to the successful completion of this ceremony to launch the Global Alliance against Chronic Respiratory Diseases.

Thank you.

Note : This speech was delivered on 28 March 2006.