WHO, in collaboration with the Royal Thai Government, the Kellogg Foundation and a host of other important international professional and academic organizations, will be organizing an International Conference titled, “Towards unity for health: a social contract for changing professional practice”, in August 1999, in Thailand. A meeting of the Planning Committee of the conference was held from 24-26 February 1998 in Bangkok.

The expected outcomes of the Conference are, partnership action plans for different organizations and WHO, to achieve “unity for health”; a global declaration on “unity for health”; a health professions code of ethics; an international grant/awards competition; action plans for country teams.

It was agreed to work towards producing a statement/declaration/social contract for the health care and health-related professions that would reflect a broad conception of health and health systems with respect to individuals and communities.

Examples of the best experiences in the world where unity for health has been attempted (even when not fully successful) will be recorded as case studies to serve as a basis for the statement. Some of the criteria for the cases would include: evidence of impact, sustainability and community cohesion.

A working paper will be prepared to summarize the examples and provide further background for the statement, by describing the current situation worldwide and identifying the World Health Assembly and Executive Board resolutions to which it responds.

Consultation on Integration of HIV/AIDS in Medical Curriculum

An informal consultation on integration of HIV/AIDS in medical school curriculum was held in Bangkok from 25-27 March 1998 with the participation of 16 experts from the countries of the South East Asia Region.

The group of experts reviewed the status of current teaching of HIV/AIDS in the South East Asian countries, discussed HIV/AIDS prevention and care-related tasks a medical graduate is expected to perform, the knowledge and skills required to perform these tasks, and finally strategies and approaches for strengthening the teaching of HIV/AIDS at the undergraduate level.

The follow-up actions from WHO that were proposed by the Consultants include sharing the consultation reports widely among the member countries; organizing advocacy meetings at intercountry level, with participation of Deans of medical schools or universities as well as the Medical Councils; developing teaching materials, organizing national level meetings to agree on course content and teaching approaches; and
ultimately, instilling the responsibility of teaching HIV/AIDS with the medical colleges who would need training and material support.

Further information may be obtained from Dr. Palitha Abeykoon, Regional Adviser, Human Resources for Health, World Health Organization, New Delhi-110002, India.

Further information on the Conference may be obtained from: Dr. Charles Boelen, Chief Medical Officer, Division of Human Resources Development and Capacity Building, WHO, Geneva (e-mail: boelenc@who.ch), or from: Dr. Palitha Abeykoon, Regional Advisor, Human Resources for Health, WHO Regional Office, New Delhi (e-mail: abeykoon@who.ernet.in)