

PRINCE MAHIDOL AWARD CONFERENCE 2022

**THE WORLD WE WANT:
ACTIONS TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE, FAIRER AND HEALTHIER SOCIETY**

Message from the Co-Chairs of the International Organizing Committee

As we enter the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic we are more certain than ever of the vital role of strong public health systems in making our world safe for everyone, everywhere to live their lives to full potential, in good health and in balance with the planet.

COVID-19 has been the greatest global shock in decades. More than 5 million lives have been lost and more than 240 million cases have been reported to WHO, inflicting enormous pressure on health systems, livelihoods, economies and even democracies.

As of October 2021, almost 6,700,000,000 (six billion seven hundred million) vaccine doses have been administered worldwide, most of them in high and upper middle-income countries. The world has created yet another inequity in terms of access to COVID-19 vaccines and technologies.

The pandemic has pushed the world into an economic crisis, the ramifications of which are still to play out fully. Economic prospects for recovery clearly show two tracks divided by vaccine access, as put recently by the OECD: those countries and economies that can look forward to further normalization of activity later in 2021 (almost all advanced economies) and those that will still face resurgent infections and rising COVID death tolls.

Yet, every country is at risk and the recovery is not secured as long as the virus circulates.

Again, we can see clearly that inequities have an economic cost, and there is an urgent need for improved governance for managing the response to this type of emergency, including pandemics.

But even before this pandemic caught us unprepared, there were other pandemics such as HIV, TB and malaria and major 'megatrends' developing and shaping what our future will look like.

The climate crisis is perhaps the biggest long-term threat to humankind. The climate emergency, for example, is impacting human lives and health in a variety of ways. It threatens the essential ingredients of good health - clean air, safe drinking water, nutritious food supply, and safe shelter - and has the potential to undermine decades of progress in global health, poverty alleviation and social development. Between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to cause approximately 250 000 additional deaths per year, from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhoea and heat stress alone. The direct damage costs to health is estimated to be between USD 2-4 billion per year by 2030. Once more the immense cost of inequities become evident as areas with weak health infrastructure and vulnerable populations will be the least able to cope without assistance to prepare, respond and recover.



Climate change, pollution and environmental degradation, along with the neglect of nature and the health of the planet, can only lead to a wider spread of infections and disease given the increased interface of human, animal and planetary health. Recognizing these complex and multidisciplinary issues requires enhanced coordination and collaboration among sectors and agencies, nationally and internationally through 'One Health' and planetary health approaches.

Likewise, there are four global demographic 'megatrends' critically important to shaping our future: population growth, population ageing, migration and urbanization. Globally, the population is growing, and the number and proportion of older people is increasing in parallel. In 2019, the number of people aged 60 years and older was 1 billion. This number will increase to 1.4 billion by 2030 and 2.1 billion by 2050. This increase is occurring at an unprecedented pace and will accelerate in coming decades, particularly in low- and middle-income countries. These changes in the global and national structure of the population require innovative adaptations to the way societies are organized across all sectors for all ages, including health and social care, transport, housing, urban planning, employment and services, and education.

Most of these environments will be urban. Currently half of the world's population lives in urban areas, and that is expected to grow to almost 80% in 2050, mostly in cities. This brings many challenges, including for health systems, but also many opportunities to create healthier, safer and more just cities and urban settings for all people. Careful urban planning can improve social cohesion and inclusion, as well as support disease prevention and health promotion among all population groups.

And populations move. Since the very first human settlements, people have moved for many different reasons. Human migration is also fuelled by environmental degradation and climate change, political instability and lack of opportunities to grow or because of aspirations to secure a safer, healthier and more supportive future. Migration is one of the 'megatrends' that will shape the world we want and the impacts on health and public health need to be addressed.

As global health leaders, practitioners and reformers, in PMAC 2022 we will consider the impact of these 'megatrends' and address together the challenges highlighted. We will also take account of the lessons learned during the COVID-19 pandemic and discuss what the required actions are to build more sustainable, fairer and healthier societies for all.

Prince Mahidol Award Conference 2022

The theme of PMAC 2022, "The World We Want: Actions Towards a Sustainable, Fairer and Healthier Society", aims to take a long view by focusing on the 'megatrends' that will shape the rest of this century and the complex interplay between them, including how they are already reshaping our lives, communities and global health landscape. They are shaping our future and the future of generations to come.

PMAC 2022 will also consider how the experiences of the COVID-19 pandemic are impacting the geopolitics of global health, population dynamics, and technological change, as well as how these experiences are also interlinked with the climate crisis.

Ten years ahead of the date to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, PMAC 2022 will look at what is needed to fulfil the promise of the SDG targets, but also look at the world we want beyond 2030: the future we are building today.

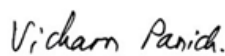
This is a four-day conference with thematic sessions that will bring together policy makers, futurists, academics and experts from the fields of global governance, international relations, demography, nutrition, political economy, climate, and technology alongside private sector and global health experts. They will carefully consider the world as it is today and envision the future for the world we want.

As the Co-chairs of this crucial global Conference, we are delighted to welcome you to join more than a thousand fellow health leaders, practitioners and reformers around the world, and to take full advantage of all the opportunities that PMAC 2022 has to offer.

Appreciation

We would like to acknowledge the valuable contribution of the co-sponsoring organizations, whose tireless efforts helped bring the Conference to fruition. We especially thank the Prince Mahidol Award Foundation and the Royal Thai Government for their remarkable support and outstanding leadership, as well as the PMAC Secretariat for providing their overall guidance, day-to-day support and incredible team spirit. We are also grateful to the organizers and contributors to the preconference activities that have provided the excellent analyses and input used in this week's plenary sessions.

Finally, we would like to show, once more, our appreciation and solidarity to all frontline workers all over the world who have bravely put themselves in harm's way in the service of others.



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