

Zarathushtis at the United Nations - Advance Global Health

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FEZANA in collaboration with the Zoroastrian Association of Victoria in Melbourne, Australia and Ashta No Kai, a Non-Governmental Organization in western India, presented a workshop at the 63rd Annual DPI/NGO conference on 1st September 2010.

Marking the first day of spring in the Southern Hemisphere, a Haft Sheen Table, wishing good health and happiness to all, was displayed at the workshop, thanks to close collaboration and support from Zarathushtis in the Australian diaspora.

The entire conference proceedings, photos, webcasts and media coverage with links are available at :

<http://www.un.org/dpi/ngosection/conference/>

The Declaration arrived at by conference participants forwarded for consideration by member states of the United Nations convening at the UN Headquarters later this month is appended below.

Best,

Behram Pastakia

Metropolitan Washington DC

6 September 2010

63rd Annual United Nations DPI/NGO conference – Advance Global Health: Achieve the MDG's

This Declaration is agreed to by the 1,600 participants representing over 350 Non-Governmental Organizations from more than 70 countries who met in Melbourne from 30 August to 1 September, 2010.

Recognizing that:

“All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood[1]”

- The Millennium Development Goals are basic to human rights, to human development, and to equity; achieving the MDGs is a moral imperative.
- The Millennium Development Goals, all of which affect the health of populations, are significantly off-track for the poorest and least politically powerful people, despite progress in many countries and the increased efforts of the international community.
- Significant health challenges, targeted by the MDGs remain. They include:
 - One billion people do not have access to adequate and appropriate food
 - 2.6 billion people around the world lack access to an improved sanitation facility
 - Eight out of 10 people who are without access to safe drinking water live in rural areas

- Almost 9 million children die before the age of five; uncounted more have preventable disabilities
 - At least 340,000 women die each year of pregnancy-related causes, including the lack of trained health care professionals during childbirth
 - Millions of people die prematurely of non communicable diseases, as well as TB, malaria and complications of AIDS every year
 - An estimated 420 million people in developing countries have a disability; 267 million worldwide have preventable visual impairment
 - Human induced environmental degradation causes short and long term health threats including climate change
- Most major physical and mental health problems of people in low income countries can be prevented or treated by well-informed individuals, families and communities; international and national efforts must do much more to support family and community based strategies.
 - Communities have a right to a voice and significant influence in policy and programs that affect their health and well being.
 - Informed citizens play a critical role in monitoring and improving the quality, effectiveness, and sustainability of health and other services.
 - Financial constraints are being experienced by many countries as a result of the global financial crisis and budget priorities. This is not an excuse to reduce efforts to achieve the MDGs.
 - The UN Secretary General has appointed an Advocacy Group to build political will and mobilize global action to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

We, the people gathered here at the 63rd Annual United Nations DPI/NGO Conference, are in support of the Secretary General's appeal for action and we call upon all governments, agencies, corporations and individuals to deliver on their human rights obligations to over a billion people living in poverty, by committing the finances and political will necessary to achieve the MDGs. We call on parties at all levels to:

- 1) Ensure that national health and nutrition plans prioritize integrated and evidence-based health promotion, illness prevention and treatment services for all people.
- 2) Actively support, encourage and resource community voices to be heard through active representation in program planning, implementation and evaluation; always including representation of women and men, children, youth and older persons, indigenous peoples, the disabled and marginalized groups.
- 3) Ensure that all agencies, including donors, involved in health promotion and healthcare delivery prioritize the formation and strengthening of national health systems to deliver, sustainable and equitable health improvements. Provide additional assistance where required to achieve equity in health related outcomes.
- 4) Ensure gender equality, empower women and expand programs to end violence against women.

- 5) Ensure governments respect and implement existing international covenants and agreements that will make major improvements to health such as the Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, the International Code of Marketing Breast Milk Substitutes, and WHO's Global Recommendations for the Retention of Health Workers.
- 6) Change international financial and trade systems so they create equality of opportunity for people in resource poor countries – fair trade not free trade and trade that maximizes health and well-being before profits.
- 7) Ensure urgent needs for financing are met, such as the replenishment of the Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria, and the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisations.
- 8) Significantly expand support for international and developing country NGOs. Coordinate activities among organizations, donors and governments to achieve maximum efficiency and effectiveness in support of services for the most vulnerable.
- 9) Advocate for the conversion of military spending to greater expenditures on: training and retraining health workers, teachers, and infrastructure for the health and education sectors.

To achieve the objectives outlined above, the citizens of the world depend on the political will and moral commitment of governments and parties at all levels.

In conclusion, it is unacceptable that so many children and adults in low income countries continue to suffer preventable illness, disability and premature deaths each year. The world knows how to prevent and treat most of the causes and has shown that well-focused efforts can significantly reduce levels of suffering. The MDGs can be, indeed must be, achieved by 2015.

This Declaration highlights the central role that individuals, families and communities must play in fostering global health. It compels all governments and health actors to respect the rights of communities while also maximizing the effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of their work by leveraging community knowledge and support.

We thank the people and Government of Australia, the State of Victoria, and the City of Melbourne, for their warm welcome and hosting of the 63rd Annual United Nations DPI/NGO Conference.

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