



**INAUGURATION
OF THE SEAT OF THE SECRETARIAT OF
THE
SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE HEALTH
NETWORK (SEEHN)
SKOPJE, REPUBLIC OF MACEDONIA
7 MARCH 2013**



Inauguration Speech: Minister of Health of Moldova

Madam Regional Director of WHO/Euro, Mrs. Jakab,
Excellencies,
Honorable Ministers,
Ladies and Gentlemen

It is indeed an honor and a pleasure for me to be here today at this inauguration ceremony of the permanent Seat of the South-eastern European Health Network Secretariat. I am also honored to speak on behalf of the ten SEEHN member states, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Israel, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania and Serbia.

Allow me to express our profound gratitude to the Government of Republic of Macedonia and its gracious hospitality. It is significant to note this advancement in the regional cooperation in the SEE under your leadership Mr. Prime Minister, and strengthening strong bonds that already exist among our countries and nations in the SEE, also through establishing and hosting the Seat of the SEEHN Secretariat in your beautiful country and the capital of Skopje.

I also wish to commend Mrs Zsuzsanna Jakab, Director of the WHO/EURO and her professional staff for the continuous and strong support to the SEEHN, for more than a decade now, in building and sustaining the SEEHN architecture and listening to the joint voice of the ten countries.

Hopefully the aura of this inauguration ceremony will set the tone for the SEEHN work in 2013 and beyond and the high standards and relevance of our decisions and actions.

I must also take the opportunity to acknowledge the contributions of our partners to the SEEHN endeavors, thus making it an agora for public health where people meet and exchange in various technical areas of public health and health systems strengthening.

This inauguration is taking place at a time when there is great optimism at the beginning of the second decade of the SEEHN activities. Those of us who attended the Banja Luka Ministerial Forum in November, 2011, no doubt came away impressed by the successes achieved in the past decade.

These emanated primarily from:

- A decade of sustained regional cooperation in health in the SEEHN
- Developing SEEHN as a health diplomacy tool to enhance peace and stability across our region, to strengthen bilateral cooperation among the member states and to be vocal, visible and influential at international regional and global public health forums,
- Building ever-growing alliance in public health for the benefit of the population in the SEE
- Understanding and spreading knowledge of public health as a public good and a tool to economic growth and sustainable development
- Supporting our national action towards economic integration in EU, Europe and wider.

Notwithstanding these developments, it is important that we avoid the complacency that may yet contribute to a reversal of the gains.

That is why we applaud to both inauguration of the Seat of the Secretariat of the SEEHN and the theme of our today's round table that focuses our attention on moving forward: forging new paths towards obtaining Health in All Policies. In so doing, there must be recognition of the need to learn from the lessons of the past. In this regard SEEHN's proud and unique tradition is inspiring. But lingering on past achievements cannot by itself get us to a new place and make appropriate changes in response to current demands.

I therefore look forward to both the SEEHN Secretariat inauguration and our today's discussions that place emphasis on 'where we go from here' and on "the strategic directions for SEEHN". It is obvious that among the most relevant considerations is how SEEHN's new strategic thinking takes into consideration its complementary role with the European wide policies in public health, and in particular WHO H2020 and the European Action Plan. We have jointly influenced the process of their development and endorsement. We will now support their implementation in the SEE.

New developments in the public health underscore the view that public health is an investment into development. In this regard the challenges can only be overcome by solutions that are multi-stakeholder/multi-sector/multi-country. They go beyond integrating public health into all of the government action, to recognition of the need to promote the principles of “equality for all” . I am heartened to see that SEEHN feature in this discussions and that public health and the development is seen as one issue jointly with financial sustainability and the wider concerns that go with shared responsibility.

In conclusion, ladies and gentlemen,

Let us use this SEEHN that we have jointly established and sustained – to forge new paths that will turn our pledges into a reality. We have huge work ahead and I look forward to the discussions and actions, supported now by strong SEEHN Secretariat, that should inform the way forward in terms of future developments in our respective countries and in the SEE, in public health and through public health.

Thank you for your attention.