

RD's Remarks

MOU between Ministry of Health of the Republic of Maldives and Ministry of
Public Health of the Kingdom of Thailand

Tuesday, 20 May 2025, Geneva

Excellencies,

Officials of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Maldives

Officials of the Ministry of Public Health of the Kingdom of Thailand

WHO Representatives to Maldives and Thailand

Partners, colleagues and friends

Good morning to you all.

I am extremely pleased to be here at the signing of this Memorandum of Understanding between Ministry of Health of the Republic of Maldives, and the Ministry of Public Health of the Kingdom of Thailand.

As we look around us, we see a world that faces several unprecedented generational crises.

After decades of growing peace, the world now faces increasing war and conflict.

Multilateralism is, perhaps, at its weakest point since the birth of the United Nations and the World Health Organization.

In climate change, our human civilization faces an existential threat like never before.

And global public health, starved of resources, is facing unprecedented strain.

Despite these gathering clouds, Maldives and Thailand are showing the world that cooperation, partnership, friendship and solidarity is the way forward.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In 1946, the WHO Constitution identified the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health as a fundamental right for every human being.

The Governments of Maldives and Thailand have shown the world that the realization of this right is possible for developing nations.

They have achieved this through constitutional mandates, legislative acts, priority in national budgets, and organization of health care.

The world is today faced with new health challenges - climatic, demographic, and epidemiological - alongside rising health care costs, increasing population demands, and technological transformation.

Both Thailand and Maldives are responding through innovation, while prioritizing inclusion and quality. They offer us important lessons, particularly on the importance of prevention, and tailored approaches for the inclusion of migrant and urban populations.

At our WHO South-East Asia Regional Office, our work is guided by our *Regional Roadmap for Results and Resilience*.

This was co-created by our Member States and our regional leadership, and sets out our strategic priorities for the duration of my term as Regional Director.

I would like to draw our attention to two of the five pillars of the roadmap.

Pillar three calls for “Realizing Access to Innovation and Technology,” and the fourth enjoins us to raise “capacity, knowledge management and research”

I am very pleased to note that the MOU being signed today details areas of cooperation, across the health system building blocks, with focused attention to primary health care, directly addressing these two pillars of our roadmap.

As we stand on the cusp of the coming AI age, the commitment of both Thailand and Maldives to technology and data is commendable. I am pleased to report that both countries actively participated in the *SCORE for health data second round global assessment*.

They have expressed great commitment to strengthen their health data systems and capacities. I am pleased at their particular focus on improved health data governance, grounded by a standards-based approach of digital data exchange.

I am also pleased to see strong engagement of both countries in our SE Asia Regional PHC Forum. Launched in Thailand, and with follow-on visits of Maldivian colleagues to learn from Thailand's health system, this engagement foreshadowed the partnership being formalised today.

I would like to thank the Government of the Kingdom of Thailand, and the Government of the Republic of Maldives.

The understanding that you have reached – the exchange of knowledge, experience, and skills – is a wonderful example of the brotherhood and sisterhood of nations which many seem to have forgotten.

You are showing the world the power of cooperation and unity - that we are better together than alone.

Your cooperation will certainly benefit the people of both your countries, and is an example to both our region and the world at large.

In this endeavour, and in all your future efforts to improve the health of your people, the WHO stands with you; our South-East Regional Office stands with you; and I stand with you.

Thank you.