

## Thimphu Declaration on Tele-health

30 July 2009

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The scope to improve access to quality health care through telemedicine and Tele-health is tremendous for the developing countries. This is more so in landlocked countries and small island states where accessibility of quality health care is a major hurdle.

Noting that a lot of work is ongoing in the SAARC region in the area of telemedicine and Tele-health;

Acknowledging the role of Tele-health in Public health and environmental protection, and its potential in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and SAARC Development Goals;

Recognising the advanced application of telemedicine in surgical and other interventions;

Addressing the issue of acute shortage of trained specialists in district and peripheral health facilities;

Acknowledging the importance of continuing medical education for health care professionals;

And recognising the great potentials and scope for landscape epidemiology;

We, the members of SAARC countries met in Bhutan on **27-30 July, 2009** and agreed upon:

1. Formulation of evidence-based guidelines for Tele-health practice in the SAARC region.
2. Development of SAARC Tele-health forum to include information on telemedicine, tele-epidemiology, GIS, remote sensing technologies and tools in health to promote the public health and environmental health using all connectivity modalities including satellite.
3. Use of Tele-health for environmental health protection in landlocked country (Bhutan) and small island state (Maldives) on a priority basis.
4. Incorporation of Traditional medicine in Tele-health in terms of patient care and treatment as well as education.
5. Preservation of traditional medicine knowledge (documents and manuscripts) by digitization generally and particularly in Bhutan.
6. In line with UN initiative on mHealth (mobile health), participants agreed to formulate a proposal on the application of mHealth system developed by the SGPGIMS Lucknow for integration and deployment in the Tele-health initiatives in SAARC countries.

This meeting urges member countries of SAARC region, UN agencies and developmental partners to coordinate, share resources and cooperate collectively for the implementation of this declaration.