Address of Welcome

World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland

Denis AITKEN, Director of the Office of the Director-General, Acting Director of Sustainable Development and Healthy Environment

Dr Saito, President of Nagasaki University, Distinguished Guests, ladies and gentlemen, on behalf of our Director General, Dr. Lee, it is a pleasure for me to open the International Joint Seminar, "Late Health Effects of Radiation: Knowledge gained from 60 years of experience in Japan." This International Seminar is jointly organized with Nagasaki University and is indeed the first time that WHO has held such a comprehensive seminar about radiation effects on health, and I hope it won't be the last.

Our guests from abroad may have noticed this morning that over 70 ornamental cherry trees have been planted on the WHO premises, along the paths in front of and behind the main building here. These cherry trees, called sakura in Japanese, and a symbol of Japan, were kindly donated mainly by Nagasaki University School of Medicine and some current and former Japanese staff of the WHO in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the atomic bombing for the purpose of achieving world peace.

Today the main objectives of this seminar are to review the latest information on late radiation-induced effects in the survivors, 60 years after the atomic bombing. Such information has served as the cornerstone of our understanding of how radiation affects human health and is used as a reference point for modern radiation safety and protection. Since most studies have been conducted at the Radiation Effects Research Foundation (RERF), jointly funded by the governments of Japan and the USA, and at Hiroshima and Nagasaki Universities, the leading scientists from these institutions have been invited.

The morning session will provide a comprehensive summary of health studies on atomic bomb survivors in Hiroshima and in Nagasaki. And this afternoon we will learn about the WHO programs on Radiation and Health and have an opportunity to discuss them with the staff members and maybe establish joint projects with our Japanese colleagues. I do encourage the meeting to come up with some ideas on future cooperation in this field.

Also I would like to say a word of gratitude to Dr. Yamashita who has been working hard to organize this meeting, along with his colleagues.

On behalf of WHO, I really wish you all a fruitful meeting and also an enjoyable stay in Geneva, and that the seminar will be both scientifically stimulating and worthwhile. I also hope the upcoming report of this seminar will be shared with researchers all around the world and used as a point of reference for future reflections. Thank you.