

Statement of Endorsement for Nepal's Candidate for Regional Director of WHO-SEARO

In today's global landscape, the emergence of highly qualified Nepali citizens with outstanding international credentials across diverse professions is a testament to their remarkable potential. However, it remains a stark reality that there are relatively few Nepali individuals occupying senior leadership positions within the United Nations system. An invaluable opportunity has now presented itself in the form of the vacancy for the position of Regional Director at the World Health Organization's Southeast Asia regional office (SEARO), which also holds jurisdiction over the South Asia region.

We warmly welcome and endorse the Government of Nepal's nomination of an exceptionally qualified candidate, Dr. Shambhu Acharya, for this pivotal role. Dr. Acharya's nomination reflects a concerted effort to garner support for his candidacy, a testament to the Government's dedication to the cause. The role of Regional Director carries profound significance, not only for the future health and well-being of the hundreds of millions residing in our region but also for global public health. The intricacies of medical and public health challenges in our region necessitate vigilant oversight and capable leadership within WHO.

It is abundantly clear to us that Dr. Acharya is the superior candidate among the two nominees competing for this position. His credentials are underpinned by a robust background in public health and extensive leadership experience in addressing global health issues. Dr. Acharya's academic achievements include a Ph.D. in public health, specialising in health policy and planning, earned from the University of North Carolina. He also holds a Master's in Sociology with a focus on social policy and an MBA in public finance and strategic management.

Dr. Acharya's familiarity with the public health and medical challenges within our region is exceptional. His three-decade-long career has been dedicated to fortifying responses at local, national, regional, and global levels. He has made substantial contributions in Nepal, Bangladesh, India, as well as at WHO headquarters in Geneva. Dr. Acharya successfully managed large-scale World Bank-funded projects in health and population in Bangladesh and played a pivotal role in establishing the Asia-Pacific Health Economics Network, which aimed to enhance the health financing capacity of WHO member states.

Having worked closely with the Director-General of WHO, Dr. Acharya has been instrumental in shaping high-level policy and strategy decisions. His interactions have extended to heads of government, ministers, and healthcare professionals across the Asian continent. Dr. Acharya has also represented WHO in various UN bodies, advocating vigorously for universal health coverage within the broader UN development agenda.

Notably, he played a central role in ensuring WHO's effective response to the COVID-19 crisis in the most severely affected countries.

Dr. Acharya's extensive publication record in various areas of health and development stands as a testament to his credibility within global and regional public health circles. His vision statement for the SEARO candidacy is marked by clarity, conciseness, innovation, and forward-looking perspectives.

Prominent global health journals, including The Lancet and the British Medical Journal, have underscored the critical importance of appointing a highly qualified candidate to the position of WHO-SEARO Regional Director. Dr. Acharya's recognition extends far beyond the present competition, as he is acknowledged by numerous global health professionals and leaders as the most qualified candidate for this pivotal position.

It is imperative to underscore that Dr. Acharya's appointment as Regional Director would not only be advantageous for the South East Asia region but would also hold global significance. Many of us have had the privilege of witnessing his outstanding work firsthand, and we firmly believe that his leadership would benefit not only this region but also contribute positively to the health and well-being of people worldwide.

Consequently, we earnestly call upon the Government of Nepal to intensify its diplomatic endeavours among the regional governments to advocate for Dr. Acharya's exceptional candidacy. Furthermore, we insist upon a transparent election process to ensure the selection of the better-qualified candidate for this pivotal position.

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