

ADDRESS BY PROF. ZHANG WENKANG, MINISTER OF HEALTH

Dear Mr. President, ladies, gentlemen and friends:

The XVth International Leprosy Congress begins today in Beijing. Entrusted by Vice Premier Li Lanqing of the State Council and on behalf of the government of the People's Republic of China, I would like to express sincere congratulations to the grand opening of the Congress and a warm welcome to friends all over the world.

In recent years, WHO, ILA, ILEP, and other nongovernmental organizations have successfully carried out the movement of "making leprosy no longer a public health problem," which played an active role in the protection of human health and promotion of economic development. This Congress will surely push the effort forward. I wish every success to the Congress.

China is a developing country with vast territories and a huge population. Leprosy has had a long history in China and used to be a serious infectious disease. After the establishment of the New China, the Chinese government has paid great attention to an-

tileprosy work, set up practical control tactics according to the real situation of our country, and adopted active measurements. Through long-term arduous effort of the numerous health workers, leprosy has been effectively controlled. During the last decades, our government has formulated and promulgated related laws and regulations, in addition to extensive health education, and at the same time strengthened scientific research and international academic exchange, and achieved great success.

Our country will further strengthen antileprosy work in the future, carry out the work with continued stable and coordinated development, and make a contribution to the global antileprosy cause.

"Working Toward a World Without Leprosy" is the common wish of humankind and also the main goal of the global antileprosy work. China will continuously work together with other countries over the world to do our best in the fight against leprosy for the improvement of health and the progress of human civilization.