

Second annual training course on global health diplomacy in China



From 5-9 July, 2010, the Global Health Programme at the Graduate Institute and the Institute for Global Health at Peking University organized the second annual executive course on global health diplomacy in China. Around 40 participants attended the course from the Department of International Cooperation in China, line departments from the Ministry of Health and its affiliated institutions, other ministries, academic institutions, bilateral and multilateral agencies in China, provincial health officials, and a potential international staff pool for the Ministry of Health. All of the participants are involved in international cooperation activities. The course was supported by the Department of International Cooperation (DIC), Ministry of Health (MoH), China, the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health, the Health Human Resources Development Centre, MoH, China and the World Health Organization.

The course received considerable attention this year, including that of Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization, who opened the course with a video welcome address. In her speech, she stressed the importance of cross-sectoral communication and negotiations for global health, and pointed specifically to China's unique and emerging role as a leader in this field. Participants were also welcomed to the course by Prof Huang Jiefu, Vice-Minister of Health, China, Minister Krystyna Marty, Deputy Head of Mission at the Swiss Embassy in Beijing and Prof Ke Yang, Executive Vice President of Peking University. Dr. Ren Menghui, Director General of the Department of International Cooperation at the Ministry of Health in China, was also present at the course and kindly hosted a dinner for all faculty and participants.

From the Graduate Institute, Professor Dr Ilona Kickbusch, director of the Global Health Programme and co-director of this course, and Dr Gaudenz Silberschmidt,

chairperson of the Global Health Programme's advisory board and head of the International Affairs Division of the Swiss Federal Office of Public Health were faculty members for the second year in a row.

All the accompanying documents produced for this course were translated into Chinese, and with the presence of excellent interpreters from WHO, the course was simultaneously translated, Chinese and English.

After a general introduction to international relations, participants were introduced to key concepts and priorities in global health, with views presented from Brazil and the European Union, ensued by a discussion on key priorities for China. Once the key terms were laid out, global health governance structures were considered, as a whole globally and also within specific organizations. Dr. Ray Yip, head of the Gates Foundation China office gave an excellent presentation on the role of foundations and public-private partnerships in global health governance, drawing participants' attention to the shifting roles of a variety of actors.

South-South cooperation is becoming of increasing importance for emerging economies like China. It refers to the ever-increasing exchange of resources, technology and expertise between countries of the South. At the course, China's growing cooperation with Africa was explored through a presentation by Dr. Lucy Chen from the Institute of Global Health at Peking University. Course participants also benefited from the rich expertise brought in by representatives from Brazil and Thailand. Dr. Felix Rosenberg from the Fiorcuz Center for Global Health, Brazil and Dr. Viroj Tangcharoensathien from the International Health Policy Program at the Ministry of Public Health, Thailand presented their country's experiences in global health diplomacy as well as how they cooperate through new alliances and South-South cooperation.

How a country can reflect the importance of global health in its foreign policy was illustrated through presentations on national approaches and strategies in Switzerland, Thailand, Brazil and the United States. Dr. Liu Peilong, co-director of the course and director of the Institute for Global Health at Peking University enlightened the group with an insightful presentation on the role of health in Chinese foreign policy.

After this second course, China is now well on its way to develop its own national global health strategy. Furthermore, focus over the next year will be to develop guidelines on how to train people for development cooperation in the Ministry of Health, and to identify the specific skills they need to be trained on. Through the development of these courses, it has become clear that global health is of utmost importance to China, as they are committed towards strengthening their role as regional leaders in this domain.