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STATEMENT BY THE ALZHEIMER'S DISEASE INTERNATIONAL (ADI)

By Dr Robert Yeoh

My name is Robert Yeoh from Australia and I am speaking on behalf of Alzheimer's Disease International and its 73 member countries globally. These member associations are large and not so large groups made up of people with dementia, their families, care professionals and others concerned about the devastating effects of Alzheimer's Disease and other causes of dementia.

Alzheimer's Disease and other causes of dementia are the major chronic health issue of this century. These diseases are having a rapidly increasing impact globally with 36 million people living with dementia now. This number is expected to double in the next 20 years and further increase up to 115 million in the year 2050. The diseases will impact particularly hard on the aging populations of developing countries.

Dementia is often not recognized due to lack of awareness, lack of understanding, and lack of information. Sadly, dementia is frequently assumed to be part of aging or worse.

It is not recognized that dementia is a terminal illness. Nor is it recognized that dementia is linked to other diseases, such as diabetes mellitus, hypertension, intellectual disabilities, and obesity.

Alzheimer's Disease International launched the second World Alzheimer's Report on World Alzheimer's Day, 21 September 2010. A short version of the report is available for those of you who are interested.

The report confirms what we all know in our hearts and that is that the economic impact on health systems and families and their carers is enormous. The world wide cost of direct and indirect care is estimated at over \$600 billion US—equivalent to the 18th largest world economy!!!

This problem will further increase as life expectancy of the world's population continues to rise. The longer we wait without acting the more difficult it will be to meet the care needs related to dementia.

Although there is no cure, there is a lot that we can do:

- Promote an understanding of dementia to reduce stigma.

- Support families and caregivers through information and services
- Train the health and care workforce to better understand person centred and caring for someone with dementia
- Promote awareness of dementia risk reduction
- Face the future and invest in research with a view to reducing in the future number of people with dementia
- These elements should form the basis of a national dementia strategy for each country and some encouraging examples of this already exist in countries like Australia, South Korea, France, Norway, Singapore and England. Countries will need to work within the limits of their national resources.

I am happy to report, with the approval of Australian Minister for Mental Health and Aging, the Honourable Mr Mark Bulter MP, that Australian Government is responding to the challenges of the Australian aging population and the expected increase in the number of people with dementia by strengthening the health and aged care system and providing funding of over A\$170 M each year to support people living with dementia their families and carers. A key priority of the Australian Government is the implementation of strong preventive health measures designed to decrease the risks of dementia and social isolation and encourage early intervention of dementia in the community.

We also like the knowledge with thanks the initiative taken by the WHO/WPRO in preparing an intervention package under the Mental Health Global Action Programme and dementia being a component of planning for in-country activities to implement the programme.

We also like to congratulate the Malaysia Ministry of Health for jointly, with Alzheimer's Disease International and Alzheimer's Disease Foundation of Malaysia, hosting the 13th Alzheimer's Disease International Asia-Pacific Regional Conference in Kuala Lumpur from 21st to 24th of October. I wish to take this opportunity to extend a cordial invitation to all of you to the conference.

Dementia care issue will not go away. Alzheimer's Disease International is talking to WHO staff about a joint action plan. We need your help as member countries of the WHO to implement these actions in your country, where possible working with the national Alzheimer association. In countries where there is no Alzheimer's association, we are happy to work with you to get an organization established.

It's time for action!

Thank you very much for listening.