



It is an honour to address this important gathering on behalf of the Government of Sri Lanka and the Ministry of Health.

Childhood cancer is not only a medical challenge; it is a lifelong journey for children, families, communities, and health systems. Today, owing to advances in early diagnosis, treatment, and supportive care, more children are surviving cancer than ever before. This is a remarkable global achievement.

However, survival alone is not enough. Our collective responsibility is to ensure that every child who survives cancer can live a healthy, dignified, productive, and fulfilling life.

Sri Lanka remains firmly committed to strengthening care for childhood cancer survivors throughout the life-course. Our national health system, founded on the principle of universal free health care, provides a strong platform for equitable access to cancer diagnosis, treatment, follow-up care, rehabilitation, and psychosocial support.

We recognize that survivorship care must extend beyond hospitals and become part of a coordinated continuum of care involving primary health care services, schools, families, and communities.

The Ministry of Health is increasingly integrating survivorship into broader noncommunicable disease and child health strategies. Childhood cancer survivors may experience long-term and late effects, including cardiac complications, endocrine disorders, learning difficulties, mental health concerns, fertility issues, as well as social and economic vulnerabilities. Addressing these challenges requires multidisciplinary, patient-centred, and life-course approaches.

Accordingly, Sri Lanka is working to strengthen structured follow-up services for childhood cancer survivors through paediatric oncology centres and referral hospitals. We are promoting long-term monitoring protocols, survivorship clinics, and improved referral pathways between tertiary care institutions and primary health care services. Our goal is to ensure continuity of care from childhood through adolescence and into adulthood.

Community health systems also have a critical role to play. Sri Lanka's well-established public health network, including Medical Officers of Health, public health nursing services, community-based maternal and child health programmes, and recently developed Arogya Health and Wellness Centers, provides valuable opportunities to support survivors closer to their homes.

We are exploring ways to further strengthen community-level follow-up, health education, psychosocial counselling, nutritional guidance, and reintegration into school and society.

Digital health and health information systems are becoming increasingly important in this effort. Strengthening cancer registries and survivorship data systems will help us better understand long-term outcomes and support evidence-based policy and service planning. We also recognize the invaluable contributions of civil society organizations, professional colleges, parent groups, and survivor networks in advancing survivorship care and advocacy.

Distinguished delegates,

Sri Lanka highly values its partnership with the World Health Organization through the WHO Global Initiative for Childhood Cancer. This initiative has provided an important framework for countries to improve survival, reduce inequalities, and strengthen health systems for childhood cancer care.

Sri Lanka's engagement with the Global Initiative supports our efforts to improve early diagnosis, standardized treatment, workforce capacity, quality of care, and survivorship services. Equally important is our participation in the Global Platform for Access to Childhood Cancer Medicines. Reliable and equitable access to safe, quality-assured medicines is fundamental to improving survival outcomes and reducing treatment abandonment.

For countries such as ours, this Global Platform represents far more than medicine procurement. It represents solidarity, sustainability, and hope. By supporting more stable access to essential childhood cancer medicines, the Platform contributes directly to improved treatment continuity and ultimately to better survivorship outcomes.

An invaluable partner in these efforts has been St. Jude Children's Research Hospital. The collaboration between Sri Lanka and St. Jude predates the launch of both the WHO Global Initiative for Childhood Cancer and the Global Platform for Access to Childhood Cancer Medicines, reflecting a longstanding shared commitment to improving outcomes for children with cancer.

Through this enduring partnership, Sri Lanka has further strengthened its free public health care system by building clinical capacity, enhancing professional training, supporting quality improvement initiatives, and advancing evidence-based childhood cancer care.

Combined with the dedication and expertise of our health workforce, these efforts have contributed to significant progress in childhood cancer outcomes while also helping to reduce the financial and emotional burden experienced by affected families.

The Government of Sri Lanka and the Ministry of Health wish to convey our sincere gratitude and deep appreciation to St. Jude Children's Research Hospital for its continued partnership, technical support, and unwavering commitment to improving the lives of children with cancer and childhood cancer survivors in Sri Lanka.

However, while progress is encouraging, major challenges remain.

One of the key challenges is ensuring continuity of survivorship care over decades. Survivors often transition between paediatric and adult services and may become lost to follow-up. Strengthening integrated referral systems and patient tracking mechanisms is therefore essential.

A second challenge is the growing complexity of survivorship needs. As survival rates improve, health systems must be prepared to address late effects of treatment, mental health needs, rehabilitation, educational support, and social protection. This requires multidisciplinary teams, coordinated services, and sustainable financing mechanisms.

Third, disparities in access continue to affect vulnerable populations, particularly families living far from tertiary care centres. Transportation costs, loss of income, stigma, and other social barriers can negatively impact long-term adherence to care. Strengthening primary health care and community-based support systems will therefore be critical to addressing these inequities.

Finally, we must continue investing in data, research, and innovation. Better survivorship data will enable us to understand outcomes more clearly, identify service gaps, and shape policies that respond to the real experiences and needs of survivors and their families.

Excellencies and colleagues,

The true measure of success in childhood cancer is not only how many children survive, but how well they live after survival.

Every child who overcomes cancer deserves the opportunity to learn, grow, work, contribute to society, and achieve their full potential.

Sri Lanka remains committed to working closely with WHO, international partners, health professionals, civil society organizations, and survivor communities to build resilient, compassionate, and equitable systems of care for all children affected by cancer.

Together, let us ensure that survivorship is not simply the end of treatment, but the beginning of a healthy, meaningful, and hopeful future.

Thank you.