

KEYNOTE MESSAGE

Dr. Anthony S. Fauci

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Warm greetings to you all.

My name is Dr. Tony Fauci, and I am the Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious (NIAID) at the U.S. National Institutes of Health and Chief Medical Adviser to President Joe Biden. I sincerely appreciate being asked to help open the National Academy of Science and Technology, Philippines' 43rd Annual Scientific Meeting with its focus on learning from the past to inform the future.

Among the most important lessons we have learned from the COVID-19 pandemic is that sustained biomedical research is essential to global well-being, as manifested by the successful development of highly effective vaccines against SARS-CoV-2. We also have seen that an effective response to emerging infectious diseases requires international scientific cooperation.

Keeping in mind the theme of this meeting, I would like to briefly highlight the value and importance of research cooperation between the United States and the Philippines while expressing my hope that this cooperation will continue and thrive in the coming years. The institute I lead, NIAID, has supported US and Filipino scientists working together for more than 30 years. As we now fight SARS-CoV-2, HIV, and other viral diseases together, our efforts continue to grow when scientific importance and public health value. Over the years, much productive NIAID supported collaborative research in the Philippines has focused on HIV and tuberculosis co-infections. Talented Filipino scientists from your outstanding institutions have participated in multiple AIDS clinical research networks that have advanced the global understanding of HIV prevention, treatment, and care particularly while addressing TB as a comorbidity in resource challenge settings. Participation of the Philippines in these multi-country networks has helped ensure that your scientists are among the core of key contributors advancing biomedical discoveries that have made AIDS a preventable chronic disease rather than an acute one with a high degree of mortality.

In addition to participation in HIV/AIDS research, Filipino scientists have helped lead the way in studies of tuberculosis particularly multidrug-resistant TB (MDR TB). The work in the Regional Prospective Observational Research in Tuberculosis (RePORT) network has been especially important and promising. With continuing support from the Department of Science and Technology (DOST), the Philippines is sure to make

significant contributions to the global fight against TB. Philippine institutions also have played an important role in other infectious diseases research. For example, Filipino scientists continue to lead research on dengue (another flavivirus), malaria, and schistosomiasis building on prior NIAID support for Filipino studies on these pathogens. For many years the Research Institute for Tropical Medicine (RITM) received NIAID funding as a tropical medicine research center of excellence. Hopefully, this institution and others will continue to receive Philippine government support so that they will remain competitive for both funding and talent. Given this track record, I also can foresee great value in the Philippines expanding its scientific leadership role in the Asia-Pacific region. In this regard, we are pleased to partner with the Department of Science and Technology through the e-ASIA Joint Research Program (e-ASIA JRP). In the future, this program—which supports collaborative research involving US and Filipino scientists—has the potential of adding real value to our overall research efforts, as long as it is adequately supported by all the participating agencies.

In closing, I want to emphasize the importance of sustained local support for scientists and scientific institutions in the Philippines and elsewhere. This support is necessary foundation to attract funding from outside the country. It is also an essential element for economic vitality and growth. In addition, as we have seen with COVID-19, science—particularly biomedical research—is fundamentally important to pandemic preparedness and effective outbreak responses that save lives and stabilize societies. Fortunately, the Philippines has long recognized the value of science.

Just four (4) months ago, we saw this again when NIAID and DOST jointly sponsored a special COVID-19 workshop focused on research findings and scientists in this region. With the success of that workshop, we look forward to convening the 2022 emerging infectious diseases of the Pacific Rim Conference which DOST has offered to co-host along with NIH and Japan's AMED.

Thank you again for a long-standing scientific partnership and for the continuing commitment of the Philippines to the global research enterprise. Through decades of collaboration, we have learned from each other and share the tradition of excellence in science and technology particularly in biomedical research. I am confident that our future collaborations will continue to contribute to scientific discovery through basic and clinical research and the training of the talented new scientists. I wish you every success with your 43rd Annual Scientific Conference and with the implementation of its results.

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