

OPENING REMARKS

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Good morning, everyone. It is my pleasure to be here with you to welcome all of you, and to help launch the 2nd International Conference on Health and Human Rights, organized by the François-Xavier Bagnoud Center for Health and Human Rights at the Harvard School of Public Health.

Before we begin, I would like to acknowledge the presence of a devoted friend of Harvard, and of human rights around the world: Countess Albina du Boisrouvray. As many of you know, it is because of Albina that we have been able to create the new Center, named in memory of her late son. Only yesterday, we were privileged to dedicate the new François-Xavier Bagnoud Building at the School of Public Health—one of several events that make up Health and Human Rights week at Harvard. And this week's events, as you may know, begin a year-long series of programs marking the School of Public Health's 75th birthday. So, thank you Albina, and members of the Association François-Xavier Bagnoud, for being here—and for helping give Harvard so much to celebrate, and to look forward to, on this special occasion.

One need not look too far these days—indeed, one can look to almost any part of the world—to see how important it is that we understand the nature of human rights, the threats posed to such rights in different societies, and the ways that all of us who care about human rights can act to ensure their protection. The François-Xavier Bagnoud Center, and this Conference, are rooted in the idea that there is vital interconnection between matters of human rights and matters of health, and that coming together in this way can do a great deal to help illuminate the intersection between the two.

This Conference, of course, not only brings together two important areas of inquiry. It also brings together individuals from more than twenty nations. It brings together scholars

and practitioners from a remarkably broad range of disciplines and professions—individuals who are deeply engaged in education and research, and individuals who are just as deeply engaged in serving the needs of people whose health and human rights are in jeopardy.

Within Harvard alone, the Conference brings together individuals from our Faculties of Arts and Sciences, Business, Divinity, Education, Government, Law, Medicine, and (of course) Public Health, as well as from other parts of the University. Indeed, I am happy to report that, since the first Conference here in 1994, faculty at Harvard have launched a new University Committee on Human Rights Studies, which is already strengthening efforts to approach questions of human rights from an interdisciplinary and international perspective.

This Conference enables us to focus more intensively on several important topics that cut across both geographic boundaries and the boundaries of traditional academic disciplines. There will be presentations and discussions about violence; about emerging diseases; about the particular needs and concerns of children; and about other significant subjects. The emphasis throughout will be on ways to synthesize ideas across disciplines, and to bring these ideas to bear in concrete ways on urgent problems of health and human rights that confront communities around the world.

Harvard is pleased to play a role in discussing issues of such consequence to the lives of so many people. I wish all of you a productive and engaging conference. Thank you for coming, and thank you for inviting me to join you.