

陈竺部长在联合国经社理事会 2009 年度部长级
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**Speech at the 2009 Ministerial Conference of the United Nations
Economic and Social Council by Minister Chen Zhu**

(July 6, 2009 Geneva Switzerland)

His Excellency Secretary General Mr. Ban Ki-Moon

Dear Madam Lucas, President of the United Nations Economic and
Social Council

His Excellency Mr. President 胡锦涛,

Distinguished ministers and delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

Good morning!

I am much honored to participate in the 2009 annual Ministerial
Conference of the United Nations Economic and Social Council. The
theme of this meeting being realizing the international goals in public
health sector demonstrates that the United Nations and the Economic and
Social Council in particular, place great importance to the work of global
health, and also reflects the leadership role of the United Nations in
global health development. Hereby I wish to express my appreciation and
thankfulness. I would also like to avail myself of this opportunity to brief
you on the overview of the Annual Ministerial Meeting of Asia-Pacific

region on Health knowledge popularization, which was held in Beijing April 29th to 30th.

Entrusted by the United Nations Economic and Social Council, the Chinese Government organized this event; 13 health ministers out of 24 countries of Asia-Pacific region, more than 110 representatives from 8 United Nations and relevant regional organizations, 14 domestic organizations, as well as domestic and foreign academic institutions and non-governmental organizations attended the meeting.

The Conference had four items on agenda, namely, “challenges facing health literacy in Asia-Pacific”, “promoting cross-departmental cooperation and action”, “the role of media and empowerment in the promotion of health literacy” and “enhancing capacity-building of health literacy”. During the two-day meeting, representatives of various countries conducted a wide range of exchanges on health literacy, and we’ve seen extensive discussions on the definition and connotation of “health literacy” and its significant impact on the achievement of health development goals.

Health Literacy refers to an individual’s “ability to gain access to, understanding and use of health information” for promoting and maintain health. It describes “the achievement of a level of knowledge, personal skills and confidence to take action to improve personal and community

health by Changing personal lifestyles and living conditions”

Delegates agreed that improving health literacy is one of the most effective weapon in the prevention of chronic non-communicable diseases and infectious diseases, including A/H1N1 influenza. Furthermore, health literacy plays a key role in achieving public health related Millennium Development Goals.

The delegates also shared successful practices and experiences in improving health literacy carried out by governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations and the private sector, covering the understanding of the concept of health literacy in different countries, health literacy status quo, method of measurement of health literacy, intensifying policies, measures and capacity-building of health literacy, the importance of cross-departmental cooperation, and the applications of the private sector, the mass media and information technology. Challenges and countermeasures were also discussed.

The conference reached following consensus:

First, health is a basic human right. Promoting health literacy is a fundamental cost-effective strategy of disease prevention, effective utilization of health services, improvement of primary health care and national health level, and promoting social development. At present, the Asia-Pacific population in a whole, have relatively low levels of health

literacy, therefore, we need to adopt more effective intervention measures, carry out activities to promote health literacy and strengthen capacity-building of the sustainable development of health literacy promotion in a bid to enhance the health literacy of the residents from various countries and regions, which is the foundation and an important guarantee for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Second, Promotion of health literacy is an important responsibility of the government, at the same time, multi-sector participation, coordination and cooperation are needed for the effective implementation. Therefore, to strengthen capacity-building of health promotion and carry out health literacy promotion activities, it is indispensable to establish partnerships among the relevant government departments, agencies, NGOs, private institutions, enterprises, media and civil groups and the role of medical and health institutions and professionals should be given full play. In addition, we shall also make full use of the media and information technology to disseminate health knowledge, and mobilize the masses to participate. The mass media can play a positive role in promoting health literacy.

Third, concrete measures to promote health literacy shall be based on social and cultural background of the country, guided by "people first" principle, and put into action. As different countries and regions have their

specific levels of socio-economic development and culture, we shall strengthen the international and inter-regional exchanges, dialogue and cooperation on the basis of fully respecting different cultures, and carry out community-based actions to promote health literacy, with particular emphasis on the promotion and enhancement of women's health literacy.

Fourth, global, regional and national action plans should be formulated at the earliest date, the connotation, measurement methods and indicators of health literacy should be defined, and scientific and feasible index system should be developed to carry out evidence-based monitoring and evaluation of health literacy.

To sum up, this Ministerial Conference served as a platform for exchanges and cooperation on health literacy for the Asia-Pacific nations, and played constructive role in facilitating governments and international organizations to develop and improve the health literacy action plans. I hope the successful experience of the Beijing Conference and the consensus reached can provide good reference to this annual ministerial meeting, and meanwhile, I am more than willing to hear about and learn from the successful stories of other countries in hosting regional meetings.

Thank you very much!