



2010 ECOSOC coordination segment- Panel I
“Towards a United Nations comprehensive response to global health challenges”
Tuesday, 6 July, 11:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.

Concept Note

Background

At the high-level segment of its substantive session in 2009, the Economic and Social Council adopted a Ministerial Declaration on the theme of “Implementing the internationally agreed development goals and commitments in regard to global public health”. The Declaration recognized that health and poverty are interlinked and that achieving the health-related goals is central to sustainable development and attainment of the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals.

While noting that (some) progress has been made in the past decade in advancing global health, across-the-board inequities in respect of health persist among and within countries as the target date for reaching the MDGs in 2015 approaches. In fact, progress on achieving the health related MDGs is lagging in numerous countries and regions due to a combination of many factors, including weak health systems, conflict, poor governance, lack of resources, weak educational systems, and poor infrastructure. Moreover, the past two years have witnessed a dramatic sequence of global crises which have and will continue to severely affect countries’ efforts to improve global health: the recent economic and financial crisis, the food and energy crises, the increased challenges brought on by climate change, and pandemics such as HIV/AIDS and H1N1.

The interplay between these dynamics is testimony to the increasing complexity and interconnectedness of sustainable development at the global level and points to the need for solutions that transcend sectoral, national and institutional boundaries is increasingly requiring coordination and collaboration between and among a wide range of stakeholders.

Global Health is a critical element of sustainable development and requires progress in many areas, not least in relation to malnutrition, safe drinking water, hygiene, sanitation, AIDS, TB, malaria, maternal, newborn and child health; and also to non-communicable disease and mental health, violence, harmful practices, road safety and neglected tropical diseases. Promoting universal access to HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, so as to ensure continued reduction of the HIV pandemic, is pivotal, as is the need for better maternal and child health and nutrition. At the same time, the Declaration has recognized the importance of multi-sectoral approach in addressing health issues, especially the social determinants of health, including promotion and protection of human rights, gender equality, poverty eradication, access to education, etc.

Support is being provided by the United Nations and the international community to countries to developing countries for the implementation of comprehensive programmes to improve public health at country level in general and progress towards the health related MDGs in particular. Efforts are underway to implement the recommendations of the 2009 Ministerial Declaration across a wide spectrum of health and the broader development areas. It is evident, however, especially in light of the challenges posed by the recent crises mentioned above, that the health-related MDGs require a substantial scale-up of efforts and resources. Moreover, it is especially important that momentum be maintained in order to ensure that global public health remains a high priority on the international development agenda. To that end, the MDG Summit in September 2010 presents a critical opportunity to agree on an action plan that builds on the 2009 Ministerial Declaration.

Objective and focus of the panel

It is proposed that a panel discussion be held during the 2010 Coordination segment of ECOSOC to take stock of efforts undertaken by the UN system in follow up to the 2009 Ministerial Declaration, consider progress achieved, and discuss gaps and challenges that remain and which need to be addressed in order to ensure a further coordinated, collaborative and multi-sectoral response by the system as a whole. It will also provide an opportunity to identify innovative ways to align policies and programmes to further support developing countries in their efforts to advance the health-related MDGs. Possible questions to be addressed include:

- How effective has the UN system response been so far in implementing the 2009 Ministerial Declaration? What was successful, what was challenging, what remains to be done? What are the UN country-level experiences to date, and where can coordination be better streamlined in order to accelerate progress in the achievement of the health-related MDGs?
- How effective have developing countries been so far in implementing the 2009 Ministerial Declaration? What was successful, what was challenging, what remains to be done? What can be done to further support country-led efforts to implement more coherent policies and comprehensive approaches to advance public health? Where should they set their priorities?
- What are some of the more effective measures countries should adopt in order to deal with the impact of the multiple crises on public health? How should the United Nations system adapt its responses in both the health and non-health sectors?
- How can partnerships be strengthened and mobilized within the UN system and with governments, civil society organizations, the private sector and academia and other development partners?

- What can be done to ensure that the momentum generated by the 2009 Ministerial Declaration is maintained over the next few years? What are some of the important next steps that need to be taken to overcome obstacles that are hindering progress by the international community to move forward in a coordinated way? What could be expected of a potential development of an action plan that builds on the 2009 Ministerial Declaration?

Proposed panelists:

Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General, WHO (tbc)

Mr. Anthony Lake, Executive Director, UNICEF

Ms. Thoraya Obaid, Executive Director, UNFPA

Mr. Michél Sidibe, Executive Director, UNAIDS