

ECOSOC REGIONAL MINISTERIAL MEETING
Closing Remarks by Hon. Rohitha Bogollagama,
Minister for Foreign Affairs

Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

In the course of the last one and half days you have deliberated extensively on a number of important issues related to the topic of this Regional Ministerial Meeting “Financing Strategies for Healthcare.” I am confident that you have had a productive exchange of views, given the unique nature of this Forum which has brought together a cross section of the key stakeholders dealing with the subject from a variety of perspectives.

Allow me to make some concluding remarks relating to this important topic.

- The ongoing global financial crisis and the other crises that the international community is facing today will have an adverse impact on the progress we are making in the achievement of the MDG's , including in the healthcare sector.
- Our region is very diverse. National health expenditures range from fairly high to very low levels, as a percentage of GDP. There is no “one size fits all” solution. Instead, solutions should be tailor made and geared towards the special needs and peculiar circumstances of each country.
- Civil society and the private sector have critical roles to play. But the public sector has to take the lead or play the role in order to

deliver effective and equitable health services, especially in the current crisis. Public-private partnerships are central for achieving the desired health outcomes. We need to innovate and nurture approaches that pursue universal and equitable health care.

- In particular, I would like to emphasize four key messages that emerged from the discussion of the last two days:
- Firstly, health goals should be pursued through multi-sectoral approaches. All parts of the Government, and all actors of a society need to engage in this endeavor. At the same time, Government's commitment to promoting wellbeing of its citizens remains central to the realization of the health agenda.
- Secondly, domestic financing is the bedrock of national health policies. We need to allocate sufficient resources. Simultaneously, we need to find ways to get "more health for the money". We need to achieve a more efficient use of available resources.
- Thirdly, for the poorest countries of the region international financing is crucial. This funding has to be adequate and predictable. We also need to pursue innovative ways of generating more financing. This is particularly true in times of crisis.
- Fourthly, and finally, countries in post crisis situations face unique challenges. There should be a special set of policies to address these challenges. These countries should be provided with special assistance. And, there is a lot that these countries can learn from each other.

I look forward to presenting these conclusions at the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review in Geneva in July this year. I also look forward to presenting the National Voluntary Report of Sri Lanka at this Session.

While the formal part of your Meeting ends today, this afternoon I understand some of you will leave on a field trip to Kandy organized with the assistance of Ministry of Healthcare and Nutrition, which will show you examples of the healthcare infrastructure in Sri Lanka. I hope that this visit will add some practical insight to the discussions you have had.

Excellencies, distinguished delegates,
I wish to thank the UN family, the UNDESA in particular for all the support extended in the organization of this Meeting. I also thank the other agencies, WHO and UNESCAP who are partners in this effort.

Finally, my deep appreciation is also extended to the Minister of Healthcare & Nutrition and his very supportive team, as well as the officials of the Ministry of Finance & Planning for their close cooperation.

To the distinguished foreign delegates, I wish you a pleasant end to your stay in Sri Lanka, and a safe return.

I thank you.