

CLOSING STATEMENT BY THE PRESIDENT OF ECOSOC
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PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF LUXEMBURG TO THE UNITED NATIONS

ECOSOC ANNUAL MINISTERIAL REVIEW REGIONAL PREPARATORY
MEETING ON PROMOTING HEALTH LITERACY

30 April 2009, Beijing, China

Mr. Under-Secretary-General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

At the end of two days of vibrant discussion, I would first like to express my satisfaction at the substantive discussions and outcome of the meeting. I would also take this opportunity to thank the Government of China for its warm hospitality and great efficiency in the organization of this meeting. The ambience in Beijing made it possible for us to have these most productive exchanges of views.

This event would not have been possible without the efforts of the Ministry of Health, the ECOSOC Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the World Health Organization. I think I can speak for everyone when I say that we have all benefited greatly from their proficiency and expertise. I would furthermore like to sincerely thank the moderators, panelists and participants who have shared their insights and lessons learned.

Our discussions have produced a wealth of valuable ideas which are sure to enrich the work of the Economic and Social Council. I am confident that the recommendations that have been put forward on how to promote health literacy and empower people to achieve the Millennium Development Goals will find their way both into legislative action at the global level and actual implementation plans at the regional and national levels.

In this regard, it will be important to have the Government of China convey the highlights of this meeting at the Annual Ministerial Review in Geneva in July of this year.

Excellencies, ladies and Gentlemen,

During the past two days we have heard how central but also cost-effective improving health literacy is in achieving many of the health-related MDGs. Improving health literacy in this region and worldwide has significant health benefits, which call for strengthening efforts in this area by all stakeholders and sectors. Without a doubt, enhancing health literacy cannot be done solely by the health sector. I would like to assure you that the importance of multi-sectoral collaboration in enhancing peoples' ability to obtain and comprehend health information, including the value in using the

media and communication technologies, will be shared at the upcoming regional AMR meeting in Ghana on the topic of m-Health.

Empowering people to acquire a level of knowledge, to take action to improve, promote and maintain health will lead to changes in personal health behaviors and lifestyle choices. Improving peoples' capacity to use health information effectively is a vital factor in prevention efforts to address tobacco and alcohol use, unhealthy diets, and low physical activity. I intend to bring this message regarding the importance of health literacy in controlling and addressing non-communicable diseases to the upcoming regional ministerial meeting in Doha, Qatar.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I wish to encourage all of you, whether representatives of government, civil society, academia or the private sector, to remain actively engaged in improving health care in your respective countries. Throughout the past two days we have discussed many interesting ideas and realistic solutions to improving health literacy. Beyond the significance of discussion, there is, however, the urgent need to move from words to actions in order to solve domestic health challenges and ultimately make a real difference in the lives of the people.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite once more the region's Member States to consider making National Presentations to ECOSOC during future Ministerial Reviews. It is an important occasion for Member States to engage in an open forum in discussions about the challenges facing individual countries, as well as the successes reached in the implementation of the MDGs.

I look forward to seeing you in Geneva in July, at the Council's annual meeting.

Thank you very much.