

Mr. President, Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

My delegation extends its sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President and to the other distinguished members of the Bureau, for the extensive preparations undertaken by you to date, towards this year's Substantive session of the Economic and Social Council. We also extend our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his informative and comprehensive reports to the High-level and other segments of this session, as well as, to the Secretariat for all the substantive groundwork they have undertaken in readiness for this important event.

We would also like to commend all the Council members for choosing such a relevant theme for the High-level segment this year. Only by underscoring the need to fully integrate health and education policies into poverty eradication strategies, can we bring to achieve the goals and objectives set at the Millennium Summit and other UN global conferences. Only by improving our substantial investment in human capital worldwide, can we successfully tackle the challenges of the new millennium. These challenges demand strong co-operation amongst ourselves. To this end, it is imperative that we work together to make the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg this year, a success and to adopt a common and holistic program of action.

We also wish to stress the need for gender mainstreaming in all human resources development policies and programs and therefore we congratulate the Council for the importance it has attached to this issue by placing it as a sub item on the agenda of its High-level segment for the first time this year. Gender-based differences should be addressed explicitly at the institutional, as well as, individual and household levels, to ensure all women and girls full and equal access to health care and education, particularly for those living in poverty.

We also recognize that human resources development must begin with an investment in our children. Any delay in investing in the health and education of young

people will deprive future generations of fundamental opportunities for development. Therefore, we call for the timely and effective implementation of the Declaration and Plan of Action recently adopted at the 27th Special Session of the General Assembly on Children.

My delegation fully supports the timely strengthening of the role of the Council and its tremendous efforts to build a culture of peace and pursue essential development goals by working closely with the General Assembly, the Security Council, as well as, the Bretton Woods Institutions and the civil society. Given the magnitude of the challenges on its agenda, the Council's practice of building synergies between all pertinent stakeholders represents the "safest road map" towards resolving them.

Mr. President,

Turning to education, Croatian society and its education system in the 21st Century are faced with numerous challenges such as: global vs. local, general vs. individual, traditional vs. modern, long-term vs. short-term. We have also recognized that, in order to achieve reform in education to cope with these challenges, all major actors in the process including students and their families, teachers, civil society, public administration, private sector, as well as, the media, has to work together with coordination and in partnership.

Changes, which have been introduced into the system, are based upon UNESCO provisions and declarations and other international instruments in the area of education. Croatia's educational system is in the process of harmonizing its legislative provisions with the European Union legislature, so that the existing principles of democracy, decentralization, autonomy, pluralism and globalization are included in teaching curricula at all levels.

An individual is seen as an active and responsible participant who is aware of collective interests and public welfare. Decentralization of educational system is allowing the growth of new forms of social partnership, with increased responsibility for local

development. Local government is involved in the decision-making process, so as to ensure that the demands of different groups of society are met. Coupled with accelerated technological development in previous decades educational process has become a lifetime process. The concept of a lifetime education is influencing every segment of educational policy and practice. The learning process takes place in various environments, not only in schools. Teaching is complemented by multimedia sources of information. Hence, schools are being transformed into autonomous centers that ensure creative and high quality programs. In building an educational system, which can provide a life-long learning process, interacting with both the private sector and social partners, it creates conditions for the long-term development of human resources. The reform of the educational system is highly influenced by three major factors:

- the development of information and communication technology
- accelerated scientific and technological inventions
- the process of globalization.

It is of enormous importance for the overall development of every country to build system of high quality education for all. Such a system should as its pedagogical aim, provide for every individual, regardless of their gender, develop their potential to participate responsibly and actively in society through sharing positive social values. Investment in human capital is the major driving force for development of every country, as well as, the basis for international cooperation in the area of science, economy and culture.

Mr. President,

On the question of health, the interdependence between human health and education today is growing stronger in the process of shaping national social and economic policies. The Croatian Government has adopted its health program for 2000-2004 in which, the promotion of health and improvement of health system, as preconditions for overall development, have been strongly underscored. It includes programs for preventive care, a healthy way of living and health preservation. The health policy in Croatia is oriented towards achieving four main goals, namely: the

consolidation of the existing health system, the removal of health risks, promotion of a healthy way of life and the improvement of quality and availability of medical service in terms of time, facilities and economic means. Nowadays, it is increasingly important to promote a healthy way of life, which includes the prevention of health risks, proper nutrition, especially for school children and the elderly, as well as, safe and healthy environment. Concerted efforts between various ministries, especially the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education, are absolutely vital in addressing these issues. Moreover, a coordinated action of the entire community is necessary and should take on board: the Government, the health system, the education and sports system, as well as, civil society. The media also plays an important part in promoting healthy life-style and preventing health risks.

As a country with an economy in transition, one of the most challenging tasks in this area, is how to match the education and health needs of a growing population with adequate resources. Due to the increasing role education and health play in the national economic development, areas such as scientific research and professional training represent fundamental intangible investments of any country. For this reason, Croatia's national priority is to focus on constantly upgrading the development of its human resources.

Having this in mind, Croatia, can contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals effectively only by being a responsible international partner in these areas. In doing so, it can help efforts to include health, education and human resources development in the overall development strategy, in order to enable everyone equal opportunities in the globalized world of the 21st Century.

Thank you.