

**CLOSING STATEMENT BY THE ASSISTANT-SECRETARY-GENERAL OF  
UNDESA, MR. THOMAS STELZER**

**ECOSOC ANNUAL MINISTERIAL REVIEW REGIONAL PREPARATORY  
MEETING ON FINANCING STRATEGIES FOR HEALTH CARE**

**17<sup>th</sup> March 2009, Colombo, Sri Lanka**

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Following two exceptional days of rich discussion, I would like to thank the Government of the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka for its gracious hospitality, as well as the Governments of Italy and Japan for their generous support in the organization of this meeting. These consultations could not have been possible without the tireless efforts of the staff of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the UN team in the Department of Economic and Social Affairs. We are grateful for their dedication and hard work. We have also greatly benefited from the expertise of the World Health Organization.

I also wish to acknowledge and sincerely thank the moderators, panelists and participants who have shared their insights and exchanged lessons learned over the past two days. Our frank and candid discussions have produced a wealth of ideas, which will benefit the work of the Economic and Social Council. We now need to ensure that ECOSOC takes up the key recommendations that have been proposed during our discussions.

Throughout the past two days we have discussed how the many different angles of health financing have a direct bearing on our efforts to achieve the health-related development agenda. In examining the outstanding challenges we have also shared replicable examples and learned methods to overcome them.

We have also come to the conclusion that the current crisis provides challenges but also opportunities. Firstly, we need to ensure that we do not falter and that progress in achieving the Millennium Development Goals is accelerated. Secondly, Governments have an opportunity to re-examine their health systems in the light of the new context in which they must function. It is clear that the public sector needs to engage other stakeholders and adopt multi-sectoral approaches in order to deliver effective and equitable health services, especially in the current financial environment. Thirdly, we need to pursue context specific solutions to health challenges, particularly in post crisis situations.

Mr. Minister, we look forward to your presentation in Geneva in July this year, where you will share the highlights of this meeting. I would like to reiterate the significance of these regional meetings to ensuring that priority issues, relevant to the

countries in the region, garner the attention they deserve at the Council's deliberations in Geneva.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

All of you, whether as representatives of government, civil society, academia or the private sector, are actively involved in improving health care in your respective countries. It is easy to walk away from this event having agreed upon priority areas, but it is only when we move from words to actions that this meeting will make a real difference for citizens – and today's session on best practices showed us that with smart ideas and determination we can make a difference.

As you are traveling back home, I would like to encourage all of you to consider how the many interesting ideas and practical solutions which we have discussed at our meeting can help you and your colleagues solve your domestic health challenges. Many of you have started a dialogue with colleagues across the region. I hope that you will continue this dialogue beyond this meeting.

In closing, I wish to encourage all of you to remain engaged in the work of the Economic and Social Council. I would especially like to urge civil society and the private sector representatives to remain involved in the work of ECOSOC. We would like to see you in Geneva in July, at the Council's annual meeting.

I see meetings such as this not as "one shot" events, but parts of a process aimed at advancing the realization of the goals we have set for ourselves.

Therefore, I would like to invite countries to follow the example of Sri Lanka and consider making National Voluntary Presentations to ECOSOC during future Ministerial Reviews, such as the one in 2011 on the theme of education, as well hosting regional consultations like this one. Countries which have made a presentation in the past have conveyed that the exercise has helped them to formulate a clear vision across departments on how their priorities in pursuing the United Nations development agenda are being realized.

With these few words of thanks, I would now like to invite H. E. Rohitha Bogollagama, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sri Lanka, to make some final remarks.

Your Excellency, the floor is yours.