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ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review
Regional Ministerial Meeting for Western Asia on
“Addressing Non-communicable Diseases and Injuries: Major Challenges to Sustainable
Development in the 21st century”

Statement by H.E. Ambassador Sylvie Lucas,
Permanent Representative of Luxembourg,
President of the Economic and Social Council

10th May 2009, Doha, Qatar

Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to commend the Government of Qatar for hosting this Regional Preparatory Meeting for the Economic and Social Council’s Annual Ministerial Review on a most timely issue: non-communicable diseases. It is a great honour for me to take part in this important event. I would furthermore like to thank the Government and people of Qatar for their warm and generous hospitality.

Addressing the issue of non-communicable diseases and injuries will contribute significantly to the Council's 2009 Review to take place in Geneva in July. Indeed, many experts see this question as *the* major health challenge to global development in the 21st century. In 2005, non-communicable diseases caused an estimated 35 million deaths, representing 60 per cent of deaths globally. Eighty per cent of these deaths occurred in low- and middle-income countries.

As you know, the Council's Annual Ministerial Review was established to track progress and scale-up efforts towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The thematic discussion is a central piece of the Review, as it allows the Council to focus on obstacles hindering the implementation of the global development agenda, as well as to explore ways to overcome them. One of the major strengths of this process is that it brings together people from a wide range of stakeholders around a selected theme, the theme of this year's Review being, the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health.

This regional meeting is the third in a series of consultations organized for the 2009 Review. The first regional meeting for South Asian countries took place in Sri Lanka on the theme "Financing strategies for health care". In the wake of the global crisis, this could not have been more relevant. Last month, the regional meeting for the Asia and Pacific Region was organized around the topic of "Promoting Health Literacy", which is the ability to gain access to, understand and use health information to promote and maintain good health. Following this meeting, two other consultations are planned on HIV/AIDS in Jamaica and on e-health in Ghana.

The preparatory process for the Council's High-level segment in July also included the Global Preparatory Meeting held in New York at the end of March. An assessment was made at that occasion on where we stand on achieving the health-related goals, the impact of the world financial crisis and health challenges in post-crisis situations.

In addition, we have discussed with more than 500 participants from the philanthropic and business community about innovative ways to cooperate to improve global public health. An e-forum was also held with contributions from over 5,000 participants from diverse regions and stakeholder groups, on ways to strengthen health systems and address emerging and future health challenges. We also had very productive discussions on the issue of traditional medicines.

The outcomes and recommendations emanating from these discussions, including today's event, will form the basis for the deliberations by ECOSOC in July, and will inform the Ministerial Declaration to be adopted by the Council. Therefore, this meeting provides a concrete opportunity to influence the debate that Ministers will have at the 2009 Review in Geneva.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Achievements realized so far in the area of health will not suffice to reach the agreed development goals. Addressing non-communicable diseases, in particular cardiovascular diseases, cancer, diabetes and chronic

respiratory diseases, is essential to achieve the Millennium Development Goals.

To reduce the burden of non-communicable diseases and injuries in this region, efforts by all stakeholders and sectors have to be enhanced: multi-sectoral plans need to be developed across ministries; greater attention should be paid to cost-effective solutions for prevention and treatment; and the care of these diseases should be integrated in primary care.

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I look forward to the recommendations how to tackle non-communicable diseases and injuries and how to use policy development and practical measures to improve their management that will emerge from this meeting. They will make a significant contribution to the debate Ministers will have at the 2009 Review in July. But more importantly, they can have a real impact on the wellbeing of millions of people. Ultimately, the objective of these consultations, as the objective of all our efforts, is to accelerate action towards the achievement of the internationally agreed development goals and, more generally, of sustainable development.

Thank you.