

ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review
Regional Ministerial Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean on
“HIV and Development in Latin America and the Caribbean”

**Closing Statement by H.E. Ambassador Sylvie Lucas,
Permanent Representative of Luxembourg to the United Nations,
President of the Economic and Social Council**

6 June 2009, Montego Bay, Jamaica

Honourable Ministers,
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me begin by sincerely thanking the Government of Jamaica for holding this regional event. The beauty of Montego Bay, the generosity of our hosts, the warmth and friendliness of the people added to the ambience and productivity of our deliberations. I would also like to acknowledge all the organizations involved in the planning and substantive preparations of the meeting which contributed to its success.

I have been most encouraged over the last two days by the presence and active participation of not only Ministers and representatives from the health sector, but also from the education, labor, economy and social security sectors. In addition, civil society, the private sector and the UN system have engaged proactively to make this a valuable multisectoral dialogue.

At the Economic and Social Council, we strive to bring together policy makers, academics, opinion makers and practitioners to galvanize action on important development issues in ways which will make an impact on the lives of the people. I believe the diverse background of participants present at our meeting has allowed our discussion on HIV to be placed within the broader context of socio-economic development, with a special focus on education. In fact, what I felt came out most strongly from our discussions is the need to focus on education and awareness raising, communication and collaboration.

I am confident that the key messages that will be brought by His Excellency the Minister of Health of Jamaica to the attention of the substantive session of the Council in Geneva in July will ensure that the Council’s deliberations build on this inclusive and constructive approach.

As President of the Council, I will endeavour to have some key messages become part of the Ministerial Declaration that will be negotiated by the Council’s Member States in the coming weeks and adopted in Geneva in July. I would like to especially highlight five elements that I would strongly urge Member States to take action on in the context of the Declaration.

First, governments should involve ministries of education, labor and finance, among others, to develop a comprehensive, multisectoral and integrated approach in tackling HIV/Aids. In fact, many of these multisectoral approaches are vitally important in dealing with public health issues in general. Education and communication are especially important to handle the stigma around HIV/Aids, which still pushes many of those who urgently need diagnosis and treatment underground.

Second, design of policies in all sectors should be supportive of public health. In this regard, better nutrition, safe drinking water and sanitation and sustainable urbanization should be pursued in tandem. Nutrition and household food security in particular were stressed as being critical elements of public health and central components for human, social and economic development. They are equally important in our efforts to contain and reverse the spread of Aids.

Third, there is a strong need to change social behaviours towards HIV infected patients with the view of respecting their dignity and basic human rights. We had heartfelt discussions around these themes, which are important in themselves but especially so in handling HIV/Aids, where the social and human approaches are as important as the medical approaches in both prevention and care.

Fourth, governments need to ensure better and more equitable health outcomes, for those affected. Governments need to lead the effort to reach out to the most excluded communities and make available affordable care, including through the promotion of risk pooling and pro-poor insurance schemes.

And last but not least, health literacy and education is an important factor in ensuring significant health outcomes and should be a key component of all health policies and strategies.

Honourable Ministers, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before concluding, let me mention that next year's ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review has as its theme gender equality and the empowerment of women, which is also highly relevant and timely coming as we celebrate 15 years after the Beijing Conference on the advancement of women. I look forward to ECLAC Member States to volunteer hosting a regional event, based on this year's successful experience.

I would also like to invite the region's countries to consider making National Voluntary Presentations to ECOSOC during future Ministerial Reviews. Fifteen countries have already volunteered for the 2010 AMR. But for 2011, when education will be the focus of the AMR, and beyond, we call on the countries of this region to come forward and share their experiences in attaining the MDGs.

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

Thank you very much.