



BRAZIL

Economic and Social Council 2009 High-level Segment General Debate

**Statement by H.E Ambassador Maria Luiza Ribeiro Viotti
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Madam President,

Brazil welcomes the opportunity to discuss the issue of Global Public Health in the present ECOSOC High-Level Segment. At a time when many countries are faced with severe financial constraints and are confronted with stark policy choices in addressing the impacts of the financial and economic crisis, it is all the more necessary to highlight the importance of safeguarding and promoting the health of the world population. We must rise to the challenge and place the theme of global health at the center of national development strategies and international development initiatives.

A clear message came out of the Forum on Advancing Global Health in the Face of Crisis and of the many high quality preparatory meetings leading to the Annual Ministerial Review: global health underpins human development and is deeply interwoven with many other key policy areas for development. A close relationship exists between health and human rights, poverty eradication, hunger and nutrition, education, gender equality and sustainable development.

An integrated and multi-sectoral approach is therefore required in order to address the complex nature of global health. Such broad approach is the reason why health has become an important foreign policy issue. As a member of the Global Health and Foreign Policy initiative, Brazil has been actively engaged in the debates on health issues that require international cooperation and political attention, such as the control of infectious diseases, the management of human resources for health, responses to natural disasters and crises, and provision of affordable medicines, among other challenges.

Madam President,

International cooperation should be enhanced to ensure access to affordable, good quality and effective medicines for all, particularly vulnerable groups in developing countries. Brazil's experience in combating the HIV/AIDS pandemic highlights the importance of sustained universal access to prevention, treatment, care and support, which encompasses access to medicines, including generic medicines. We look forward to a renewed dialogue with all development actors to review the balance between the needs of public health and intellectual property rights.

In this regard, we would have liked to see a reference in the Secretary-General's report to the critical role intellectual property plays as a determinant of access, affordability, innovation, local production and trade, both in brand name drugs and generics, especially where they are needed the most, in poor developing countries. A political message needs to be conveyed on the importance that Member States strive to resolve the IP agenda. While the technical negotiations on IP and health must continue to be tackled in the specialized fora in Geneva (WIPO, WHO and the WTO), the issue needs to be duly recognized at the political level within the UN system given its importance and impact on development.

A discussion on global public health should also address the role of biodiversity and traditional knowledge. Medicines derived from nature's bounty, developed over time by indigenous and traditional communities can significantly contribute to our fight against

disease and poverty. The fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from such medicines is a global imperative. The adoption of a legally-binding international regime on access and benefit sharing under the Convention on Biological Diversity is urgent. As the current chair of the group of like-minded mega-diverse countries, Brazil is working tirelessly towards this objective.

The global response to the current H1N1 influenza pandemic demonstrates the benefits of further strengthening collaborative and cooperative initiatives at the regional and international levels. The international community should build upon the experiences of combating the avian influenza and work towards an effective, equitable and transparent international mechanism aimed at prevention, control and protection against health threats, ensuring full and fair participation of developing countries, including access to high quality affordable diagnostics, treatments, drugs and vaccines.

Madam President,

The promotion and protection of global health is related to all Millennium Development Goals. Eradicating poverty and hunger (MDG1) is a key factor in improving maternal health and fighting child mal-nutrition. Access to education (MDG2) and promotion of gender equality and empowerment of women (MDG3) can contribute to the reduction of child and maternal mortality. Sustainable access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation (MDG7) are essential measures to combat many diseases. In order to achieve these interrelated goals, it is crucial to enhance and strengthen the Global Partnership for Development (MDG8).

As we approach the final phase of the MDG timetable, it is more urgent than ever for donors to deliver and improve on their existing bilateral and multilateral official development assistance (ODA) commitments, particularly to low income countries. While progress has been made, resources in 2008 still fell US\$ 20 billion short of the agreed international commitments. Of the 22 member Development Assistance

Committee (DAC), only 5 countries have fulfilled or surpassed their commitments to the 0.7% goal. The international community must keep its ODA commitments.

The Human Rights Council discussed, in a Special Session, the impacts of the current financial crisis on the realization of all human rights. On that occasion, the Council sent a message to world leaders that human rights, particularly social and economic rights, such as the right to health, cannot be the price to pay on the path to economic recovery.

It is also important to continue to explore new and innovative financial mechanisms which may supplement – but not replace – traditional official development assistance. Brazil is a founding member of UNITAID – a global initiative that provides funds to promote access to treatment for HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, especially for low-income countries. At present, 93 countries have benefited from price reductions for life-saving medicines.

South-South Cooperation may also play a relevant role. Brazil has been providing targeted expertise, technical cooperation and support to address health challenges faced by a number of developing countries, particularly in Africa. Such programs have had a special focus on the fight against HIV/AIDS and malaria, as well on the strengthening of national health systems.

Madam President,

Brazil is fully committed to the achievement of the MDGs through international as well as domestic actions. In 2007, President Lula participated in the launch of the Global Campaign for the Health MDGs. The Campaign aims to give renewed impetus to MDGs 4, 5 and 6, with a particular focus on maternal, newborn and child health, and on the fight against HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. In view of the current financial and economic crisis, Brazil reaffirmed its commitment to the Network of Global Leaders for the Health MDGs, with a view to maintain or increase support to health initiatives.

Brazil has adopted comprehensive social programs to meet the MDGs. Over the last 6 years, significant progress has been made in fighting poverty, reducing inequality and promoting public health. We are generally on track to achieve or surpass most of the MDGs by 2015, but important challenges still remain. In public health, Brazil should meet MDG 4 – reducing the under 5 infant mortality from 57 to 18 deaths per one hundred thousand births – ahead of schedule. As a result of active public health policies, MDG 6 has already been achieved. The number of people with HIV/AIDS is stable at 0,6% since 2000, the incidence of malaria has decreased since 2005 and tuberculosis has also stabilized. Given the wide disparities between regions, as well as the geographic dispersion of the population, Brazil still needs further efforts in order to meet MDG 5. Since 98% of births occur in hospitals and clinics, the Ministry of Health adopted the National Pact for Reduction of Infant and Maternal Mortality, focusing on improving the conditions of maternal health services in the country.

In spite of the economic and financial crisis, Brazil is committed to maintaining and strengthening its unified health system, which ensures free and accessible healthcare to all Brazilians. In addition, crosscutting social programs, such as the “Bolsa Família” conditional cash transfer, are also being enhanced. They contribute not only to the achievement of MDG 1, but also to the promotion of maternal health and the reduction in child and infant mortality. The challenge ahead is to improve quality, expand coverage and control costs, in order to consolidate past gains in public health and spread them to all segments of society, in particular the most vulnerable.

Madam President,

Achieving the Millenium Development Goals, especially in the field of public health, is feasible. It depends on our collective engagement and strengthened cooperation.

Thank you.