



Summary of the Global Preparatory Meeting for ECOSOC 2009 Annual Ministerial Review on Global Public Health

31 March 2009

OPENING SESSION

In her opening remarks, **H.E. Mrs. Sylvie Lucas**, President of ECOSOC and Permanent Representative of Luxembourg, briefed delegations on the preparatory process for the 2009 AMR, in particular the E-discussion, the philanthropy event and the AMR regional meeting in Sri Lanka, which had taken place already with great success. On the Global Preparatory Meeting, she pointed out that it was fitting that the Council had chosen to focus on the global financial crisis and health challenges in crisis situations.

Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), in a statement delivered by Mr. Eric Laroche, Assistant Director-General, said that health ministries cannot achieve the health related goals on their own. Policies are required in areas such as education, transport, road development, in order to improve health. Multisectoral approaches are needed to address issues, such as access to clean water, nutritious food and a hygienic environment, all of which have an immediate impact on health outcomes.

Health is at the heart of MDGs. For example, poverty cannot be reduced without addressing the issues of health agenda as diseases lead people to fall below the poverty level, from which it would take on average about nine years to go back up. It was pointed out that during this difficult time of financial and economic crisis the international community should focus on health as investment and that investing in people's lives is the best way to prevent crisis and ensure sustainability. While citing the examples of successes in polio eradication and HIV/AIDS programmes, it was stressed that what is needed to achieve the MDGs is strong political commitment.

Mr. Jomo Kwame Sundaram, Assistant-Secretary-General for Economic Development, UNDESA said that it was very timely for the Council to focus on implications of the global financial crisis on public health and on healthcare in conflict situations given those were two of the biggest challenges facing the achievement of the health-related MDGs.

He also noted that sustained economic growth and a near doubling of health aid from public and private sources between 2000 and 2006 helped countries make headway towards achievement of the health-related MDGs. He however expressed concern that the current crisis could risk to reverse hard earned progress while at the same time noting that it was encouraging to hear that many countries and other actors had promised not to cut aid for health.

On health challenges of countries in crisis, he noted that health is a key component of humanitarian assistance but that it does not receive the attention it deserves for sustainable recovery after a crisis. The health sector can make an important contribution to the strengthening of the social fabric of communities. He said that in order to ensure a successful transition from emergency relief to development it is important to ensure that this is fully recognized and that health issues are properly integrated in the comprehensive approaches to peace and stability.