

**Speech at General Debate of the 2009 UN Economic and
Social Council Ministerial Conference**

by Minister Chen Zhu

(July 8, 2009 Geneva Switzerland)

Dear Madam Lucas, President of the United Nations Economic
and Social Council,

Mr. Sha Zukang, Deputy Secretary General of United Nations

Mr. Moderator,

Distinguished ministers and delegates,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

As a developing country with the most population on the planet,
whether China achieves the Millennium Development Goals or
not exerts direct influence over the achievement of MDGs in the
whole world. In the past few decades, we've all witnessed the
relentless efforts China has made in achieving the Millennium
Development Goals, especially in relation to health. China has
completed certain health targets 7 years ahead of schedule such as
reducing infant mortality rate and mortality rate of children under
the age of five, combating malaria and remarkable progress has
been made in the reduction of maternal mortality rate, combating
diseases such as AIDS and tuberculosis. Not long ago, China

launched a new round of deepening medical and health system reform, which clearly stated "the provision of the basic medical and health system as public goods to all the people." It not only reflects the governing concept of the Chinese government of attaching importance to the wellbeing of the people and safeguarding social equity and justice; but also is the important guarantee and intrinsic driving force for China to speed up the implementation of its international commitments.

First, the core value concept and innovation of China's health system reform is providing basic health care services to the whole population as public goods.

The fundamentals for Millennium Development Goals are equal value as well as basic right to health and the pursuit of survival which are universal in human society. To achieve the Millennium Development Goals, we need to rally financial and technical support, besides, we want more political will and appropriate policy frameworks. From China experience in achieving the health related Millennium Development Goals, economic development and technological progress contribute to a large part, but more importantly, the Government engages with strong political commitment and adopts strategies conducive to

promoting health equity. In the health reform, the Chinese government further put forward the goal of "universal access to basic medical and health care service" and the tasks of "steadily promoting equal access to public health services and establishing basic medical health system", and stressed that the Government is responsible for providing the basic medical and health system and should lead in the provision of public health and basic medical services. China also made it clear that the medical and health reform should resolve the issue of fairness in the first place and achieve equal access to public health services to earnestly ensure that every citizen can meet their basic health needs. This is an important political commitment the Chinese government has made in the field of health, which is not only the core philosophy to guide the future development of health industry, but also the internal driving force for the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Second, Deepening health care reform with the purpose of establishing basic health care service system is a systematic project.

In order to secure the smooth implementation of China's health care system reform, we put forward that four systems, namely,

medical services system, public health services system, medical insurance system and drug supply system should be established. By building a sound system of medical and health services, especially strengthen the grassroots health service network in rural areas and the central and western regions, we can effectively turn around the imbalance of health resources and improve health service capacity in rural and poverty-stricken areas in order to protect the health of both urban and rural residents. An integrated urban and rural public health service system can contribute to the promotion of equalization of basic public health services, so that the Government will select cost-effective interventions and provide them free of charge to all the urban and rural residents; in the meantime, the government is able to implement major national public health services programs, which will effectively prevent and control major diseases and risk factors. By initially establishing medical insurance system with universal coverage, we can improve the equity and justice of health financing, and prevent from happening the vicious cycle of poverty or returning to poverty due to illnesses. By establishing national essential drug system and promote the rational use and effective stockpile of essential drugs, we can lower drug costs on the part of patients. We will establish the four major systems proposed in the health

care system reform, and try our utmost to address fundamental issues of accessibility and sustainability of health services among the whole population.

Third, the government's investment in health could not only provide support to health undertakings but bring along relevant economic growth.

At a time of worldwide financial crisis, many countries are facing certain difficulties in realizing the Millennium Development Goals, but the Chinese government believe health is not purely consuming undertaking but important momentum to economic growth, and has taken deepening the medical and health care reform an opportunity to stimulate domestic demand and ensure wellbeing of the people by taking a series of measures to accelerate the development of health undertakings. In the fourth quarter of 2008, the central government issued a major strategic plan to expand domestic demand and promote development, which places primary health infrastructure at grassroots level as a new important area of government investment, that is, 5.8 billion Yuan out of total 100 billion Yuan new investment will be used to support rural health service system. In the next three years, the government at all levels will invest another 850 billion Yuan for the health reform, mainly channeling into reforms of medical

insurance, primary medical care system at grassroots and public health and other key areas, of which the central government will contribute 331.8 billion Yuan. These policies and measures will not only promote health development, enhance people's health level and push forward the realization of health-related MDGs, but also bring along health consumption and stimulate the development of relevant industries.

In addition, I hereby would like to make some brief comments on the questions regarding basic wellbeing of rural workers proposed by the International Migrant Organization yesterday. The Chinese government attaches great importance on the health and wellbeing of rural staff working in cities and formulated and issued relevant laws and regulations. The migrant workers with long term employ contracts have access to medical insurance for urban employees and those without long term employ contracts can enjoy the New Rural Cooperative Medical Scheme in their original regions. Besides, the government formulates extra budgets each year to provide medical assistance to poor population in the society, including poor migrant workers. And the Chinese government also revised education laws especially for protecting the rights of being educated in cities of children of

migrant workers.

Fourth, vigorous, orderly and effective public health measures are the critical guarantee for response to A/H1N1 outbreak, but deepening health care system reform is a fundamental way to extensively enhance Chinese public health level.

In the globalized age, any emergent public health incident can burst beyond borders and become a shared problem. Therefore, the Chinese health departments are taking deepening health care system reform as an opportunity to enhance public health level in an all around way as soon as possible. As the current A/H1N1 influenza epidemic is undergoing further developments, I would like to take this opportunity to give you an overview of China's A/H1N1 flu control.

Ever since China identified its first case on May 11, there have been three developmental stages of the pandemic. The first phase is from May 11 on which the first case was confirmed in the mainland. The Chinese government immediately adopted control strategies with strengthened inspection and quarantine at exit and entry points, preventing imported cases and stepping up

management of close contacts. The second phase is marked by the emergence of the domestic infection case transmitted by imported cases on May 29. The Chinese government took the strategy of "Control imported cases and contain domestic transmission". In the third phase, right after few domestic cases with unknown infection sources discovered on June 12, there were more clustered cases appearing in schools. The government decisively adopted the strategies of "Reduce domestic infection, contain community transmission, treat the severe cases and respond to epidemic development", stepped up prevention and control measures on the epidemic. First, adjust and improve inspection and guarantee measures at exit and entry points. Second, strengthen the prevention and control in prioritized places, including schools, hospitals and public places and that of prioritized population. Third, strengthen the treatment of severe cases and gradually adopt measures of classified treatment and adjust procedures of case diagnosis. Fourth, make sound material preparation for response to epidemic, strengthen vaccine research and development, accomplish the commission of manufacturing, collecting and reserving antiviral drugs and vaccines and attach importance on the role of Chinese Traditional Medicine according to plans. Fifth, intensify basic work with surveillance

as the priority and improve viral lab testing management of A (H1N1) influenza. Sixth, formulate administrative regulations on medical treatment cost for patients. Seventh, strengthen health education and opinions guiding. Through a series of comprehensive control measures that are legally and scientifically based, China has done its maximum to contain A/H1N1 influenza. As a developing country with 1.3 billion population and relatively backward public health facilities, China has reported 1151 confirmed cases as of July 7, and all are mild cases. We can say that the control and containment work in China has achieved remarkable effects. At present, China is closely tracking the epidemic trends, and making timely study and decisions to scientifically adjust control and prevention strategies. In the meantime, we will further strengthen cooperation with the international community to tackle more tough challenges ahead. Currently, we have had some new knowledge about viral characteristics and epidemic features of A (H1N1) influenza. However, generally speaking, our understanding about the virus is limited and it is hard to identify the future development of the epidemic. In order to further strengthen the scientific research and exchanges about the disease with health sectors of all countries throughout the world, Chinese health departments will

host International Scientific Symposium on Influenza Pandemic Response and Preparedness on 21-22 August in Beijing. I hereby extend my sincere invitation to all of you who work in the health industry to make some time out of your tight schedule to attend the conference.

Dear delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

As I noted in the national voluntary report yesterday, although China has scored tremendous achievements in economy and public health, China remains a developing country, and there's still a big gap between the development level of health industry in China and that of the developed nations, and the contradiction between people's health needs and balanced economic social development remains acute. Therefore, China will be actively engaging in international health cooperation and receiving particular technical and financial support to help China accelerate its improvement of national health and promote achievement of Millennium Development Goals within time limit and reaching the set standards. At the same time, we are fully aware that the successful realization of MDGs is not determined by a single nation, but related to joint efforts and achievement breakdowns in various countries. Therefore, Chinese health community is

willing to, under the leadership of the WHO, enhance coordination with other countries, unify actions and make due contributions to the international community to the best of its ability.

I believe through the concerted efforts of governments, international organizations, as well as the international community at large, we will be able to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, which will be a key milestone of improving the health of all peoples and building a harmonious and prosperous world.

Thank you!