
Sri Lanka is interested in China's experience in Health Insurance Schemes –Dr.

Kahandaliyanage

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By: Dinisha Fernando
The National Voluntary Presentations were the hallmark of ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review on Tuesday the 7th July 2007. Representatives from Bolivia, China, the Dominican Republic, Japan, Jamaica, and Mali gave informative presentations about their respective nation's progress toward meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Each country outlined the positive changes that have been implemented as well as the challenges that are still being faced. The Chinese presentation was of particular interest to Sri Lanka because of China's experience in working with public financing for healthcare.

Dr. H.A.P. Kahandaliyanage, Secretary to the Ministry of Healthcare and Nutrition; spoke on behalf of the Sri Lankan Delegation, saying how the delegation has "learned much from China's experience" and "are indeed impressed that China, with its large population, enormous regional disparities and limited resources have achieved important progress in social development, including the health related MDGs." Dr. Kahandaliyanage inquired regarding the medical insurance scheme implemented by China that already covers 85% of the population: "We also understand that through your current medical and healthcare reform, this scheme will be further strengthened. In Sri Lanka too, we are facing future challenges in public financing for healthcare, and we would be interested to hear of China's experience in introducing a health insurance scheme." The representative of China spoke about how his country has met and surpassed some of the MDGs already, well before the 2015 target date and is well on its way to achieving the rest of the goals. Among the MDGs China have already met are reducing the mortality rate for children under 5 and halving the instance of malaria. China is well on its goal to improve maternal healthcare, has expanded its TB healthcare coverage, and its response and action taken in response to the H1N1 virus is laudable. The Chinese representative identified five key tasks: (i) Improving grassroots medical and health service systems, with a goal that every village will have its own clinic in three years; (ii) Making primary public health service equally accessible for people to "provide urban and rural residents with primary public health services including disease prevention and control, planned immunization, maternal and child healthcare and health education;" (iii) expediting the construction of basic medical insurance system covering all urban and rural residents to reach 90% or higher; (iv) establishing a national system of essential medicine; and (v) Promoting the reform of pilot projects in public hospitals. As the representative for Pakistan observed, China is "people-driven, people-led, and people-focused." The representative from China admitted that at the moment, the investment by the government is rather low with provisions of 100 Yuan per person, although they are expecting a 50% increase in the future and there is a need to improve healthcare services to gain citizens' trust. The representative also stressed the crucial point that health is the responsibility of all government officials, not just the Ministry of Health. For instance, China's Deputy Prime Minister is involved in the control and prevention of AIDS. Even yesterday, guest speakers expressed a need for all government officials to become involved in a nation's healthcare and see it as a priority. Perhaps this is a key element that is needed in order to achieve our ideal: proper universal healthcare coverage.