
Sri Lanka participates at the 66th World Health Assembly in Geneva

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The Sri Lankan delegation, led by the Hon Minister of Health Maithripala Sirisena, participated at the 66th World Health Assembly, which was held at the United Nations Headquarters in Geneva. Ambassador Ravinatha Aryasinha, Permanent Representative to the UN in Geneva, Dr P. Mahipala, Director General of Health, Dr W. Jayantha, Deputy Director, Dr S. Amunugama, Deputy Director, and Mrs Natasha Gooneratne Second Secretary of the Permanent Mission, made up the delegation to the Assembly, and were among the more than 190 Member State delegations attending. The Hon Minister Maithripala Sirisena addressed the Assembly on its opening day, presenting both the G-15 statement and Sri Lanka's national statement on developments and expected outcomes within the health discourse. Minister Sirisena, through the national statement briefed the Assembly on the country's developments in the areas of non-communicable diseases, health and nutrition, communicable diseases and migrant health. He further expressed his hope that WHO's decision to reduce the budget allocation to the South East Asian Region would be reconsidered. During his presentation of the G-15 statement, the Hon Minister commended the WHO for its preparation of the Global Action Plan for the prevention and control of NCDs for 2013-2020 and a comprehensive global monitoring framework for the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases, and recommended its adoption to the Assembly. Sri Lanka currently chairs the group of 17 developing countries known as the G-15, which focuses primarily on cooperation among developing countries in the areas of investment, trade, and technology. Ms Lakmini Mendis, Counselor Trade at the Permanent Mission, currently operates as the group's coordinator in Geneva. Read Hon Minister of Health's Full statement . Director General Dr P. Mahipala also presented Sri Lanka's national statement under the Assembly's agenda item on non-communicable diseases, informing the Assembly on the major developments to prevent non communicable diseases (NCDs) established in Sri Lanka, including the strategic decision to recognize 2013 as the year for prevention of NCDs. Read Director General of Health's intervention on NCD. Sri Lanka was also invited to share its national experiences and views on the implementation of the Global Fund at a special event on the sidelines of the World Health Assembly, which was chaired by the Minister of Health of Ghana. Dr S. Amunugama in his intervention presented views on how such collaborations could be improved, including observations on providing relevant Member States required flexibility during the implementation process. The country's involvement in the multilateral health sphere further continues later next month, when Sri Lanka hosts the Twenty-Ninth Global Fund Board Meeting in Colombo.