Madam Moderator,

At the outset, I would like to join the other Speakers in thanking the Secretary General and the DG, WHO for organizing this Forum on Advancing Global Health in the face of crisis. It is indeed very timely.

Madam, in April 2005, the Prime Minister of India Dr. Manmohan Singh launched the very ambitious National Rural Health Mission which seeks to provide quality health care in rural areas by making health services accessible, affordable and accountable to the people. The main focus of the Mission is exactly what Liya spoke so passionately about – to reduce the IMR, the MMR and the burden of communicable disease. The early evidence of the impact of the Mission is very encouraging. The IMR has come down from 58 per 1000 live births in 2005 to 55 in 2007. The MMR has come down from 301 in the triennium of 2001-2003 to 254 in the triennium 2004-2006. There has been significant increase in institutional deliveries and in full immunization coverage. As part of the National Rural Health Mission, this year we will be introducing a number of new vaccines, including the pentavalent vaccine which includes the Hepatitis B vaccine that Dr. Rajeev Venkayya mentioned. It would have Hepatitis B and Hib vaccines in addition to Diphtheria, pertussis and Tetanus vaccines that we have been giving earlier. The main constraint is not the availability of funds but the supply of this vaccine for our huge requirement. We will first introduce it in 5 states and if we get more vaccine from GAVI, we will introduce it in another 5 States and then gradually cover the whole country.

I would like to thank our development partners – the World Bank, WHO, DIFID, the Bill and Milinda Gates Foundation and of course the Government of Norway which has been working in 5 of our States, for their consistent support.
Coming to HIV/AIDS, I would like to say that in 2007 when the results of our National Family Health Survey III came out it indicated a much lower level of prevalence of AIDS than previously thought. So we had all the international experts and biostatisticians from WHO, the World Bank, CDC Atlanta, UNAIDS, etc. examine that data and they reached the conclusion and endorsed that our rate of prevalence was not 0.9% as thought earlier but 0.36% and the numbers came down from 5.57 million to 2.46 million. As a result, the world wide figures for AIDS came down.

Coming to the latest crisis, the pandemic of H1N1, I would like to say that all the effort put in by Dr. David Nabarro and others to prepare for the outbreak of H5N1 has paid off. We have so far been able to prevent the secondary spread of the disease and have taken sufficient steps to prevent our citizens from any outbreak of the pandemic. We also have three vaccine producers in the private sector ready to produce the vaccine as soon as WHO makes available the virus isolates and the seed. And they would be able to make the vaccine not only for our citizens but also for others in developing countries. We have so far had 30 cases which have been laboratory confirmed. Out of these 28 are those who came from infected countries in the West and the remaining two also caught the infection from those who had come from the West. I would like to say that the developed countries would do a great service to the developing countries if they could contain and check the spread of infection in their own countries. I would therefore urge them to take action to stop the spread of the infection.

Thank you.

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BACK TO TABLE OF CONTENTS