Statement by Mr. Randhir Jaiswal, First Secretary, at the General Debate in the Coordination Segment of the Substantive Session of the ECOSOC, on 8 July 2010

Mr. President,

Let me begin by thanking you for your able guidance and support rendered to the Economic and Social Council this year.

Over the years, the ECOSOC has played an important role in advancing a holistic and coordinated approach to global economic and social development taking into account the interrelatedness of the different goals and targets of the major United Nations conferences.

The Coordination segment of the ECOSOC session, in particular, has been an effective follow-up framework for the previous year’s Ministerial Declaration. The deliberations in the segment go on to impart a systemic coherence to the ECOSOC commitments.

The agenda for this year’s coordination segment focuses on the 2009 High Level Segment Ministerial Declaration – “Implementing agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health.”

We are hopeful that our engagement would lead to concrete outcomes and help in advancing the health related targets of the MDGs and other Internationally Agreed Development Goals.

Mr. President,

The global public health scenario today presents a mixed picture. Achievements and optimism are laced with serious concerns. The number of people dying from communicable and non-communicable diseases for lack of adequate healthcare support still remain alarmingly high, more so in the developing countries.

The outbreak of new and unforeseen epidemics, such as H1N1 last year, pose a serious challenge to the ongoing health efforts; diverting national and international focus, resources and scientific endeavor away from the planned health road map.
Health indicators account for 3 out of the 8 MDGs and have direct implication on the realization of the rest of them. Five years away from our Millennium commitment, we cannot but emphasize the significance of progress on health in advancing and sustaining our developmental goals.

Mr. President,

The Ministerial Declaration of 2009 provides a comprehensive strategic framework for tackling global health concerns in an integrated manner.

It calls for action through a combination of good public health policies including stress on tackling hunger, providing social safety nets, availability of affordable and safe medicines, sanitation and sharing of benefits, knowledge and technology. It reiterates focused action on HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis, and neglected tropical diseases.

Mr. President,

The health sector has received the highest political commitment of our Government.

Our flagship National Rural Health Mission launched in 2005 is one of the biggest interventions of its kind in the health sector in the world. It aims to cover more than 600 million people, especially women and children, and has successfully provided equitable, affordable, accountable and effective primary health care to them.

The Reproductive and Child Health Programme -Janani Suraksha Yojana, a safe motherhood intervention platform, and a component of the National Rural Health Mission, has benefitted 28.5 million women so far.

As a result of our sustained efforts, infant mortality rate in India has come down to 53 in 2008 and we are hopeful of reducing it to 30 by 2012. The Maternal Mortality ratio has declined from 301 in 2003 to 254 in 2006.

India has a low adult HIV prevalence of 0.36% and this is showing signs of reaching a plateau. Our dedicated National programmes on Tuberculosis, Malaria, surveillance of communicable diseases, cancer among others, similarly, have made significant progress.

Due to shortage of vaccine, India faced a major challenge in dealing with the outbreak of influenza H1N1 last year. We geared ourselves to address the issue in a timely manner and in June this year successfully launched our indigenously produced H1N1 vaccine.
While I recount these success stories, it is more to demonstrate our steadfast commitment to providing health services to our people. We remain fully aware of the huge challenges that lie ahead of us.

Mr. President,

International cooperation has a key role to play in achieving the health related goals, be it provision of resources, transfer of technology or capacity building. We call on the developed countries to meet their commitments in this regard.

In the spirit of South-South cooperation, India has been privileged to share its development experience, including in the health and related sectors, with fellow developing countries. The pan-African e-network project, which *inter alia*, is linking major hospitals in Africa with super-specialty hospitals in India for providing quality tele-medicine is a worthy example of this.

An important component of the global health strategy is to make available affordable medicines to the poor especially in the developing countries. India, today, is a leading source of cost effective and quality generic medicines and we would like the global community to benefit from them.

In this regard, we urge Member States to be sensitive to the cause of global public good and not to take actions which become barriers to legitimate trade. The Intellectual Property Right regime does not militate against the principle of the greatest good for the greatest number.

It’s time, Mr. President, that we redouble our efforts to make “Health for All” a reality.

Thank you.