

## **UN-NGO IRENE Pacific Asia Conference**

Dear All

I am glad to inform you, my dear friends and fellow IRENE coordinators that we hosted another successful UN-NGO-IRENE/Asia-Pacific Conference, the 4th of its kind, on 19th March 2009 in Beijing. It was focused on Public Health Awareness in line with the Theme of AMR of ECOSOC July 2009. I am sending you the final Recommendation Paper and the participating NGOs list for your reference. We received strong support from Mr. Nikhil Seth and Dr. Hanifa Mezoui. Due to crossed travel arrangements, Nikhil couldn't make it to address the meeting. But we are honored that Mr. Sha Zukang, the Deputy Secretary-General of UN delivered a video message of congratulations and encouragement.

We are glad that Hanifa joined us as always and performed her first formal duty as President of UN-NGO-IRENE and Permanent Representative of AICESIS to UN. She has an office in Paris now and will continue the IRENE work with us.

Keep in touch and Best wishes.

Yours sincerely,

Cui Jianjun  
Secretary General  
China NGO Network for International Exchanges

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**RAISE PUBLIC HEALTH AWARENESS AND ATTAIN MDGS**

**A Recommendation Paper of**

**The 4th Conference of UN-NGO-IRENE/Asia-Pacific to**

**The Annual Ministerial Review of UN ECOSOC, July 2009**

19<sup>th</sup> March 2009

## Beijing, China

*The “Public Health Awareness Forum” – the 4th Conference of UN-NGO-IRENE/Asia-Pacific was held in Beijing on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March, 2009 under the co-sponsorship of China NGO Network for International Exchanges (CNIE) and the NGO Section of UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA). Undertaken by the Chinese Medical Association (CMA), the Conference was attended by about 80 delegates representing 50 non-governmental organizations, media agencies and private sector from seven Asian countries, namely, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, India, Nepal, Vietnam, and China. The President of CNIE Mr. Zhang Zhijun made opening remarks of warm welcome. The Under-Secretary-General Mr. Sha Zukang of the United Nations sent a video message of congratulations to the Forum and China’s Vice Minister of Health Mr. Huang Jiefu delivered an address at the opening ceremony.*

*Focused on the three sub-themes — “Overall Situation of NGO Involvement in Public Health Awareness”, “How to Raise Public Health Awareness” and “Experience, Lessons and Suggestions”, the Forum witnessed in-depth discussions on such topics as “health awareness among the rural population”, “awareness about women and children’s health”, “prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS”, “role of the media”, “corporate social responsibilities” and “NGO initiatives and recommendations” .*

- Recognizing that “implementing the internationally agreed goals and commitments in regard to global public health” has been affirmed as the theme for the ECOSOC Annual Ministerial Review in Geneva July 2009 and likewise for the Regional Ministerial Meeting on Health Literacy to be held in Beijing April 2009;
- Acknowledging that public health is of global concern and is one of the issues highlighted and emphasized by the UN Millennium Development Goals, that three out of the eight items of the MDGs are directly related to public health, that

heightened health awareness and better health conditions are important guarantees for good quality life, and for the attainment of the MDGs as well, and that health promotion, education and publicity campaigns are important means to raise public health awareness;

- Taking note of the fact that despite major progress in public health programmes around the world in recent years and constant improvement of health conditions among the general public, situations are not even across the world due to multiple factors such as different economic development levels, historical background and cultural conventions. In many poor countries and regions, particularly some remote rural areas, there is still a dearth of doctors and medicines. Health care services for women and children are still depressingly far off. Some conventional infectious diseases are still spreading within certain areas, new epidemics are cropping up now and then and some chronic, occupational and endemic diseases are menacing the physical and mental well-being of the population. Meanwhile, bad habits and unwholesome ways of life such as smoking and unhealthy diet are still rife among many people;
  
- Believing that to realize the MDGs by raising public health awareness, and making people healthier in body and mind are not only an urgent task for developing countries but also a common challenge facing the whole international community;

We, participants of this Forum, would hereby put forth the following recommendations to the Regional Ministerial Meeting on Health Literacy and the Annual Ministerial Review of UN ECOSOC:

**I. The United Nations**, who has an irreplaceable role to play in promoting global public health endeavours and in achieving the MDGs should take reinforced steps to enhance dialogues between the South and the North, facilitate South-South cooperation, build more platforms of exchanges and encourage global partnership for development, all with a view to attaining the health-related goals set in the MDGs.

**II. The World Health Organization**, as the only health agency in the UN system shouldering the responsibility of guiding and coordinating global health policies and efforts, should encourage information dissemination, experience sharing and technology transfer, seek to install a permanent global mechanism for disease prevention, control and monitoring, work to reduce child mortality, improve maternal health and combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other major diseases, prevent and control outbreaks of new pandemics like SARS and avian influenza, and take actions to deal with other public health problems such as tobacco use and alcoholism.

**III. Governments** should honour their commitment to the MDGs and take it as a priority goal of national development to ensure equal access to basic public health service for all. They should map out people-centered public health policy strategies and increase budgetary input in national public health programmes to meet the targets for sustainable development of the health care system, strengthen capacity building in education, publicity and other public health related undertakings and give special favour to rural areas and economically backward areas. Social medical insurance coverage should be further extended to the overall population.

**IV. The private sector** should develop a greater sense of corporate social responsibility and ethics and fulfil their due obligations by supporting the efforts to uplift public health awareness and literacy. Pharmaceutical companies in particular should strictly follow the state rules and regulations and produce safe drugs accessible and affordable by all.

**V. The mass media**, by taking advantage of new technologies - especially information and communications technologies for optimum mobilization and utilization of resources, should make the best of their special edge in publicity to bring more health knowledge to the people and make them more health-conscious.

**VI. The civil society** with a multitude of comparative advantages, can serve as an important force in disseminating knowledge of health and for achieving the health-related MDGs. The UN-NGO IRENE/Asia-Pacific should be encouraged to

strengthen its position as a platform to coordinate and assist both national and regional NGOs to take concrete actions for global health despite the current financial and economic difficulties.

**VII. People of the world**, particularly those in less developed countries, are the main actors in striving for the health MDGs. With due respect for different cultural backgrounds, ethnic traditions and social customs, people around the world should be fully motivated and mobilized to involve themselves in the efforts of raising public health awareness and consciousness, and discarding unhealthy habits and lifestyles.

Being convinced that all human beings are equally entitled to public health care service, it is our common aspiration to see a world of harmony where people enjoy good health, and it is our common mission to make it happen. NGOs participating in this Forum are prepared to make relentless efforts for the betterment of public health in the Asia-Pacific region and in the whole world and for the attainment of the health MDGs.