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**Coordination, programme and other questions:
tobacco or health**

Statement submitted by International Society of Doctors for the Environment, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2012/100.

Statement

As health-care professionals, we would like to comment on how health relates to sustainable development and poverty reduction. I am also here to explain the important role the health community and other non-governmental organizations can play in developing health-related solutions.

Poverty and health are directly related: the poorer you are, the less healthy you are. The less healthy you are, the less you can work, and the more you move into poverty. Businesses gain if all employees are healthy; from lower health-care costs, to less disruption from sick leave and job-related injuries. Health-care professionals are important partners in helping to create a healthier workforce by offering strategies for primary prevention and providing ongoing support to both employers and employees.

Good health is critical to, and will also be a result of, achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Without sufficient healthy food, the only Goal on track, maintaining good health is difficult. Good health is critical to enabling school attendance and adequate learning. Education markedly improves the chances of achieving and maintaining good health. Women are critical to the health of their families, but they cannot function optimally if they are not empowered to do so and are not themselves healthy. The better educated a woman is, the healthier her family tends to be. It is all connected.

The second leading cause of death in children worldwide is diarrhoeal disease, which is directly related to the quality and quantity of water and food. Improving sanitation improves the ability to maintain clean water and food, and increases the likelihood that, girls especially, will attend school. Diarrhoeal disease and the accompanying malnutrition adversely affect the central nervous system and intellectual functioning of children and thus their ability to optimally contribute to their society. Again, it is all connected.

Health professionals play a critical role in advising on health hazards (physical, chemical and behavioural in the environment), of detecting when hazards are present in the environment, and in carrying out surveillance to be sure preventive health measures instituted by all levels of Government are achieving the expected goals.

We need basic age and gender disaggregated data collection for evaluating new programmes and defining the parameters of local situations. Recent research by the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War in a major hospital in Monrovia, Liberia, found that intentional injury data are not collected routinely or systematically in the emergency room. In addition, it indicated that incidents of violence against women are not fully reported to the Liberian Armed Violence Observatory from other sources. This shows the potential for huge data gaps. Where and how data are collected can have serious effects on programme and policy decisions. Thus, efforts to improve the health of the community are very much dependent upon strong government infrastructure.

It is imperative that we work together to find the most effective and efficient solutions to promote health and development, reduce poverty and improve the economic climate for all. Because it is all connected.