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**STATEMENT BY DR MU LI
REPRESENTATIVE, INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL FOR THE
CONTROL OF IODINE DEFICIENCY DISORDERS (ICCIDD)**

Mr. Chairman, Your Excellencies and Distinguished Delegates:

Thank you for the opportunity of speaking with you today on behalf of the International Council for the Control of Iodine Deficiency Disorders (ICCIDD). I am Dr Mu Li from the School of Public Health at the University of Sydney, and the ICCIDD Deputy Regional Coordinator for the Asia Pacific region.

At a global level, iodine deficiency remains the most common cause of preventable brain damage and loss of intelligence. Iodine Deficiency Disorders (IDD) elimination efforts contributes directly to six of the eight UN Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), namely:

- Eradicate poverty
- Reduce child mortality
- Improve maternal mortality
- Achieve universal primary education
- Promote gender equality
- Cooperate with private sector as part of partnership for development

At the 58th World Health Assembly in Geneva, May 2005, the resolution WHA52.4 was passed, urging all Member States:

1. to strengthen their commitment to sustained elimination of IDD as part of their regular health programmes and anti-poverty efforts including through universal salt iodisation;
2. to take urgent measures to reach the remaining one third of the world population, mostly the poorest and economically disadvantaged groups;

3. to include health promotion in their control strategies so that the use of iodised salt comes a standard practice based on awareness of the need for iodine in the diet in order to ensure physical and mental well-being, especially for expectant and breast-feeding mothers, infants and young children;
4. to establish multidisciplinary national coalitions that include the salt industry (salt producers, distributors, and retailers) and the education and media sectors, in order to monitor the state of iodine nutrition every three years and to report to the Health Assembly on progress;

The Resolution also requested the Member States to report on implementation of this resolution to the 60th World Health Assembly in 2007, and every three years thereafter.

Year 2005 was the second target year, set by the international community, as the goal for sustained IDD elimination. Now another year has gone by, while two thirds of the world's countries have achieved this goal, many countries are lagging behind. This translates to one billion people worldwide are still not protected from IDD, which means that 23 million babies a year are still being born with a barrier to achieving optimal intellect. We are also concerned that because of the general belief that IDD may not be a major concern in island nations, that IDD in some countries in the pacific region may have been neglected. There is a lack of quality data on the iodine nutrition status at the country level.

In the Western Pacific Region, through the efforts of WHO, UNICEF and ICCIDD in collaboration and partnership with national governments, international aid agencies, the public and private sectors, significant progress has been made in the fight against IDD in recent years, particularly in countries such as China, Laos, the Philippines and Viet Nam. We ask WHO WPRO continues this effort and to take a coordinated approach to IDD with other micronutrient deficiency disorders such as iron deficiency anaemia and vitamin A deficiency. We appeal to WHO WPRO to take the WHA Resolution 52.4 seriously to implement it in the Region. We urge WHO WPRO to ensure all nations in the Region will report to the 60th WHA on their country's IDD status.

Thank you for your attention.