



Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

I welcome this initiative to hold a Special Event on Avian flu. Like the

productive recent event on the African food crisis, it is an example of the revitalization of ECOSOC in practice. I commend you, Mr

versus national efforts to ensure vaccines are in place to deal with any outbreak?

We have experts here today better qualified than I to discuss the possible answers to these questions. But for me Avian flu, and the danger of a human pandemic arising from it, graphically illustrates why the world needs an effective multilateral system.

SARS killed 800 people and cost the world \$30 billion. But had the World Health Organization's Global Outbreak Alert and Response Network not kicked in so well, we might have been looking at something far worse. Controlling avian flu will depend upon countries being willing and able to share information about outbreaks without delay through the WHO, FAO and the World Organization for Animal Health, so that the world's resources can be swiftly marshalled to respond.

This is not something nation states can do alone. If the United Nations system can effectively lead the world's response, and do it well, we will have given our critics irrefutable practical evidence of what this Organization can do.

Avian flu also underlines the extent to which we have all become

They must be a concern for all our peoples, of whatever continent or income group – it is particularly timely that the General Assembly is currently considering a draft resolution on action to improve our public

If Avian flu takes hold in a country without the basic health

infrastructure to deal with it we could all face very severe

consequences. Many lives would be lost, development gains reversed, and the magnitude of the threat to all our health multiplied. I cannot think of a more stark way of reminding ourselves that achieving the Millennium Development Goals is not only a moral imperative, but an act of enlightened self-interest for us all.