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UNITED NATIONS

Press Release

UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR ON HEALTH TO VISIT ECUADOR

The Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, Paul Hunt, issued the following statement today:

Geneva, 11 May 2007: Paul Hunt, United Nations Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health, will visit Ecuador at the invitation of the Government from 14 to 18 May 2007.

The main purpose of the visit is to investigate the spraying of illicit crops along the Ecuador-Colombia border and its possible impact on the right to the highest attainable standard of health of those living in Ecuador.

Last month, the Special Rapporteur wrote to the Government of Colombia asking to visit Bogota in order to discuss the border spraying issue. The Colombian Government indicated that it was not possible to receive the Special Rapporteur at this time due to prior commitments.

In Ecuador, the Special Rapporteur will meet with Government officials, civil society representatives, academics and others, to discuss the spraying issue. He will also undertake a field trip to the border area to meet with individuals and communities there.

While visiting Ecuador, the Special Rapporteur will also have one day of consultations with civil society organizations on right to health issues that fall within the Special Rapporteur's mandate, but which are unrelated to the main purpose of the present mission. Following the mission, the Special Rapporteur will take up with the Government of Ecuador some of these broader right to health issues.

Prior to arriving in Quito, the Special Rapporteur is visiting New York and Washington DC to meet with the UN Department of Political Affairs, Pan-American Health Organisation, and the Organisation of American States.

The Special Rapporteur will host press conferences on Monday, 14 May at 10:30 and on Friday, 18 May at 16:00 at the UNDP Office in Quito.

The Special Rapporteur is an independent expert appointed by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in 2002 to help States, and others, promote and protect the right to the highest attainable standard of health. The mandate has now been assumed by the Human Rights Council.

For further information on the mandate of the Special Rapporteur and copies of available reports, please consult the website of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights:
http://www.ohchr.org/english/issues/health/right/