**2017 Human Rights Council Social Forum**

**Closure of the Social Forum**

**Statement by H.E. Ms. Maria Nazareth Farani Azevêdo, Permanent Representative of Brazil, Co-Chairperson-Rapporteur of the Social Forum**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, I would like to thank my Belorussian colleague, Ambassador Yury Ambrazevich, for co-chairing this important event with Brazil. The opening of this event gathered the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the heads of WHO, WTO, UNAIDS. I believe we had world-class panelists that despite their different natures and respective responsibilities are engaged in guaranteeing that everyone is granted access to health, not only in the face of epidemics, but in their daily lives.

We also listened to the profound and very personal testimony of Ms. Maturu, and during these last three days, we had the opportunity to have a high-level discussion on human rights, health and epidemics. Governments, civil society, organizations, private sector representatives, people living with HIV and health workers, among other stakeholders, had the opportunity to exchange best practices, assess challenges and unveil barriers related to access to healthcare and the promotion and protection of human rights in this context.

Most of the panelists who shared with us this podium, signaled discrimination and stigma as a major obstacle for HIV prevention and treatment. Public policies and initiatives to tackle prejudices against key populations including in the context of healthcare setting, are fundamental for the success of epidemics control through a human rights perspective. Criminalization of practices and behaviors which increase even more the marginalization of populations must be urgently addressed.

The issue of universal health coverage and access to medicines, vaccines, diagnosis, were outlined as the materialization of the right to health. Doctor Tedros, the new Director-General of the WHO, in his very inspiring opening speech emphasized this idea and alerted that universal health coverage will not be achieved when people are stigmatized, marginalized or criminalized, as the great healthcare services and non-discrimination are mutually reinforcing endeavors, and we must put all our efforts into it.

Another conclusion that we take from the discussions is that the role of civil society and communities in the formulation and implementation of health policies is crucial and must be valued and reinforced. Evidence shows that the effectiveness of health policies is strictly related to the meaningful participation and engagement of targeted population.

Finally, many participants recalled the Agenda 2030 as a very timely tool for the realization of human rights, including the right to health. As was reaffirmed here, health is a cross-cutting issue and the fulfillment of Goal 3 will require the implementation of other related goals.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as a Co-Chair of 2017 Social Forum, I shall thank you very much for your contribution. I believe we had a very very good discussion, although the turn-out was smaller than we expected, the ones who came really did give a lot for the debates that we had. And I heard from some colleagues that were here that the debates were very fruitful, very true, very passionate and conducive to a lot of thoughts on the way to go. I should also thank those who participated online and I have to also thank the OHCHR and UNAIDS for joining forces with us to organize this event.

I should leave you with one thought that was presented to us during the opening of the session by the Director-General of the WTO. He said: “there is no higher calling for the international community than to work together to fulfill the right to health”. It’s obvious but it’s very important, coming from the World Trade Organization.

Thank you.