



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



52nd DIRECTING COUNCIL
65th SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE

Washington, D.C., USA, 30 September-4 October 2013

CD52/DIV/1 (Eng.)
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

WELCOMING REMARKS BY DR. CARISSA F ETIENNE
DIRECTOR OF THE PAN AMERICAN SANITARY BUREAU, REGIONAL DIRECTOR
FOR THE AMERICAS OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

**WELCOMING REMARKS BY DR. CARISSA F ETIENNE
DIRECTOR OF THE PAN AMERICAN SANITARY BUREAU, REGIONAL DIRECTOR
FOR THE AMERICAS OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION**

**30 September 2013
Washington, D.C.**

**52nd Directing Council of PAHO
65th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Americas**

Honorable President
Honorable Ministers of Health
Distinguished Delegates
Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps
Colleagues
Ladies and Gentlemen

Welcome. Welcome. Welcome.

I am delighted to welcome you all to this 52nd meeting of PAHO's Directing Council. We come together over the next few days to review the progress and achievements of our Region, and to plan for challenges and opportunities which our Member States face as they seek to ensure the right of all our people to health.

I am honored to share this session with my esteemed colleagues:

- Dr. Félix Bonilla, Secretary-General, Ministry of Health of Panama and President of this Council
- Dr. Nils Daulaire, Assistant Secretary for Global Affairs of the Department of Health and Human Services of the United States of America
- Mr. Héctor Salazar Sánchez, Social Sector Manager of the Inter-American Development Bank
- Mr. José Miguel Insulza, Secretary-General of the Organization of American States
- Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization

As we meet, we remember the many persons in our countries who have suffered loss of life and continue to experience the aftermath of disaster. We wish to express our solidarity with the people and government of Mexico, Peru and some Central American countries... May God bless you and keep you.

The Secretariat has always looked to the guidance of the Member States and we especially seek your wisdom at this time when our discussions and deliberations take place against the changing shape of technical cooperation and the backdrop of the ongoing global conversations on the international agenda for sustainable development in the post-2015 years.

How that agenda is defined and which goals are set will direct development priorities and the flow of resources for decades to come. And how those resources flow will affect how the lives of the people of our Region will be shaped.

For PAHO, there is no debate but that health is a pre-condition for, as well as an indicator and outcome of sustainable development. Who could argue against the evidence that supports health's role in strong societies, growing economies, stable countries, peace and security? PAHO's Strategic Plan 2014-2019, which you will deliberate on, is responsive to the dictates of health and sustainable human development.

Today, the very nature of technical cooperation between Member States and Regional Offices and Country Offices is evolving, as countries rightfully seek a more prominent role in shaping global and multilateral agendas, whether through regional blocs or as individual Member States while at the same time increasing efforts to meet the health needs of all their citizens...This evolution will require new approaches by us all, at what is a critical juncture in both national and international development.

And so, we are looking for support from our partners and friends through forceful advocacy, inclusive dialogue and joint action, in a world where persistent and recalcitrant inequalities threaten past and future progress. We believe that, in the words of Dr Chan that "universal coverage is the single most powerful social equalizer." Our Member States are showing that universal health coverage is not only for the wealthiest countries. They are showing that it is within reach of countries throughout the Americas. Each country will take its own path to advance this goal, but we can all aspire to achieve it.

As you can see from your Program, we have a full week ahead of us, and I look forward to our discussions and decisions: with reports from the Council's committees, as well as updates on WHO Reform and its Program of Work and Budget for 2014-2019; pending resolutions for review and adoption, including those related to International Health Regulations, evidence-based policy-making for national immunization programs, a plan of action for the prevention and control of noncommunicable diseases, chronic kidney disease in Central America's agricultural communities, and human resources for health.

You will be asked to approve PAHO's Strategic Plan for 2014-2019, under the theme: "Championing Health: Sustainable Development and Equity." I would like to voice my strong support of this resolution on behalf of those who have managed a

robust participatory consultation process led by the Countries' Consultative Group and which included national consultations in 51 countries and territories.

This Plan will help to sharply focus PAHO on the pressing task of reducing the inequities in health in the Region within and among countries and territories by addressing the social determinants of health and the progressive realization of universal health coverage.

You will also receive Progress Reports on Technical Matters, among them: neonatal health within the continuum of maternal, newborn and child care; the elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and congenital syphilis; the MDGs and health targets; tobacco control, worker's health; onchocerciasis (river blindness); vital and health statistics; and the status of Pan American Centers.

There will be more side events this year than in past meetings of the Council, reflecting the wide range of issues that engage us. Please mark these on your personal schedule.

There are also some items on your Agenda that you must not miss: the official photo of the Heads of Delegations at lunch today, the reception this evening in honor of the Ministers and PAHO/PAHEF Awardees. The Art Exhibits to touch your aesthetic selves.

And of course, there are the conversations at lunch and over coffee, in the hallways outside the meeting rooms, on the way back and forth to the hotel, where friendships are made and nurtured and consensus brokered.

We are delighted you have come. Welcome.