



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/9 (Eng.)
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

PANEL DISCUSSION: HEALTH IN THE POST-2015 DEVELOPMENT AGENDA

**Remarks by Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General
of the World Health Organization**

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**2 October 2013
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I am pleased to participate in this panel, which is looking at an issue that means so much to the future of public health, here in PAHO and everywhere else in the world.

The debate about the place of health in the post-2015 development agenda has been taking place in numerous meetings, including those of WHO governing bodies.

Here are some of the main messages I have picked up.

Everyone wants the momentum, the resource flows, and the results stimulated by the MDGs to continue. Everyone wants to see the almost magical effect of clear and limited goals, with great emotional appeal, continue.

For the health-related goals, I am constantly reminded by Member States that the job is far from finished.

Progress in reducing maternal and child deaths lagged behind other goals. It is only recently, through renewed commitment and innovative ways of tackling long-standing problems, that we are beginning to see results.

No one wants to see this momentum stall.

History tells us, time and time again, that epidemic-prone diseases, like HIV, TB, and malaria, will resurge if control efforts relax. The pressure to keep cases and deaths from these diseases moving down must continue.

Making progress in human development has become much more complex and far more challenging than it was at the start of the century.

More and more, opportunities for a better life are shaped by powerful global trends.

In a world of radically increased interdependence, opportunities are also shaped by the policies of the international systems that govern finance, trade, and business relations.

These trends need to be considered when shaping the post-2015 development agenda.

Last week, the Lancet published an editorial from the economist, Jeffrey Sachs, on the post-2015 development agenda.

He described the MDGs as “the most successful global undertaking in history to coordinate action to fight extreme poverty in all its forms”, and stressed the need for this objective to be maintained.

He cited the world’s deep crisis of rising social inequality as a top priority that needs to be addressed.

The procedures for setting new goals have been designed to ensure a broadly inclusive process that also draws on the world’s best expertise.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Here is where we stand concerning the place of health on the new agenda.

In March, the governments of Botswana and Sweden co-convened, together with WHO and UNICEF, a high-level dialogue on health in the post-2015 development agenda.

I was present. That was a stimulating and thought-provoking meeting that lived up to high expectations of a high-level dialogue. The desire to get things right was readily apparent. No one was looking for an easy way out.

The meeting put forward three broad conclusions.

First, health must remain central to the post-2015 development agenda.

Health is a beneficiary of development. It contributes to development. And it is a key and readily measured indicator of what people-centred, rights-based, inclusive, and equitable development seeks to achieve.

Second, participants recognized the need to keep the goals simple. A compelling health goal is one that resonates well with the public and parliamentarians, but also captures big-picture health challenges in a world that is far more complex than it was in 2000.

Finally, post-2015 goals must recognize the contribution of health to broader development and well-being. They should include targets to accelerate progress on the existing MDGs and address emerging and neglected health priorities, including non-communicable diseases and sexual and reproductive health rights.

They should focus on health systems through universal health care and consider the impact of other sectors on health.

Consultations have since moved forward. The High-level Panel of Eminent Persons, convened by the UN Secretary-General, delivered its report in early June. It was discussed last week during the UN General Assembly.

The report's key message is a call to end absolute poverty, in the context of sustainable development, by 2030.

The report articulates five fundamental principles.

Leave no one behind. Put sustainable development at the core. Transform economies for jobs and inclusive growth. Build peace and effective, open, and accountable public institutions. And, finally, forge a new global partnership.

These principles are then translated into 12 proposed goals. Goal four is to "ensure healthy lives."

The goal has five targets.

These cover infant and young-child mortality, maternal mortality, immunization coverage, sexual and reproductive health, and the disease burden from HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria, neglected tropical diseases, and priority noncommunicable diseases.

As the report states, achieving goal four "requires universal access to basic health care."

The continuity is there, as is recognition of the impact of NCDs, and broad support for UHC.

This is where we stand today. The first phase of the process has been completed.

In my view, health is in a good place.

The debate continues, as Member States negotiate and eventually agree on the best agenda for sustainable development in the years to come.