
PAHO/ECLAC PRESS BRIEFING DIRECTOR'S CLOSING REMARKS—30 JULY 2020

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In closing, I really want to express my gratitude to Alicia and her team from ECLAC, to my own team at PAHO, and of course to all those who have participated in this important event to launch this report. It is clear that ECLAC and PAHO will continue to work in socializing this report and very importantly working within countries for technical cooperation so we can help countries as they embark upon a new paradigm for their economies.

It is true that we are living in very particular times; a time where COVID19 is directly impacting the health and wellbeing of millions throughout the Americas. The health sector we recognize has the lead role to play in tackling this pandemic, so that economic activity can recommence, but we need to begin planning for this renewed effort as far as the economy is concerned. First and foremost, we must protect health: otherwise reactivating the economy will simply be not possible!

I am calling therefore on the heads of government in our Region to take up this challenge with vigor! To tackle COVID19 so that we do not lose too much ground in health gains that we have reported in recent years. To scale up investments in health and prioritize those people living in conditions of vulnerability. And to adopt a whole of government and a whole of society approach so that we can together overcome this pandemic, and build resilient societies with the necessary economic opportunity and social protections for our people. Solidarity has to be at the core of all that we do, solidarity in country, and solidarity across countries in the Americas and beyond.

So this joint report will be a tool for governments not only to navigate the current crisis but we hope also to start a dialogue among all sectors and even among countries on how to work for this convergence between health and economy for the future. Let's not fool ourselves, crisis like this may well come again, but based on our lessons learned together during this pandemic, I hope that we would be better prepared. and so, I take this report as the beginning of something else, the beginning of a change in the way that we organize our economies, our social protection mechanisms, and health systems.

We have always been aware of the inter-dependency of health and the economy in the Americas. But it is now more than ever that we must take up the mantle to implement the necessary health and economic measures to tackle COVID19. And I just say it is now more than ever that we must build inclusive health and economic sectors that work in the interests of all, leaving no-one behind! So, thank you once again and you'll be hearing much more about us as our two institutions begin to work with other institutions across the region and with all of our countries. Thank you so very much.