



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



**49th DIRECTING COUNCIL**  
**61st SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE**

*Washington, D.C., USA, 28 September-2 October 2009*

---

CD49/DIV/1  
ORIGINAL: PORTUGUESE

**OPENING REMARKS OF THE MINISTER OF HEALTH  
OF THE FEDERATIVE REPUBLIC OF BRAZIL  
DR. JOSÉ GOMES TEMPORÃO**

**OPENING REMARKS OF THE MINISTER OF HEALTH  
OF THE FEDERATIVE REPUBLIC OF BRAZIL  
DR. JOSÉ GOMES TEMPORÃO**

**49th DIRECTING COUNCIL  
Washington, D.C., 28 September 2009**

Dr. Mirta Roses, Director of the Pan American Health Organization; Your excellencies, Ministers of Health of the Region of the Americas; Your excellencies, Ambassadors of the countries of the Region of the Americas; Honorable delegates;

Good morning

As President of the 48th Directing Council of PAHO, I am very pleased to welcome you to the opening of this session of the Directing Council. I would like to take this opportunity to address this Governing Body to offer some thoughts on the events of the last year and how they relate to the agenda of the 49th Directing Council that is about to begin.

I will be brief.

The year 2009 is in many ways an atypical year. Since late last year, we have been buffeted by a serious global economic crisis caused by the collapse of the financial centers of the developed world, which has profoundly affected our Region in ways that differ from country to country. Thus, in health, cooperation among countries is essential to ensuring that the recovery that we are beginning to witness is sustainable.

Then there is the influenza A pandemic, associated with the H1N1 virus. This pandemic has had a significant impact on our health systems and health systems all over the planet, and we have no certainty as to how this threat will evolve.

The public has focused on these two issues, but we must not allow the world to forget that we are already more than half way to the deadline for meeting the Millennium Development Goals and do not yet have a definitive solution to poverty's impact on the health of our peoples.

The financial crisis and resulting concern of Governments and key actors about overcoming it has shifted the focus away from the diseases of the most disadvantaged populations, leading to cutbacks in the resources for international cooperation initiatives.

This has had a serious impact on the social determinants of health and the Governments' capacity to offer reasonable basic health care services. Like other multilateral agencies, PAHO is an ideal venue for discussions on strengthening regional or global strategies to deal with this issue, such as the strategy for strengthening networks for the delivery of basic health care services.

Directly associated with poverty are the effects of the prevalence of neglected diseases in developing countries. Two basic issues surround this issue: access by the populations of these countries to products that meet their specific health needs, especially for diseases that disproportionately affect them; and capacity building for the surveillance, control, and elimination of infectious diseases.

I am convinced that by adopting and implementing strategies for building these capacities, improving our countries' research and development systems, and bolstering current mechanisms for the joint procurement of vaccines, drugs, and other supplies, we will create more just and equitable living--and especially health--conditions for our societies.

It is essential to underscore the importance of maintaining and institutionalizing reference centers like BIREME as a model instrument for disseminating knowledge and promoting access, not only in the Region, but worldwide.

At the same time, the influenza A(H1N1) pandemic has showed us that we cannot go it alone and that only by acting in concert will we conquer global challenges. Greater access to transportation and the growing circulation of goods and people will make us ever-more vulnerable to outbreaks of this type.

We cannot, however, close our borders or attempt to stem these flows. The solution to these problems lies in preparing for them, which means strengthening our epidemiological surveillance systems and our capacity to respond to these events. In my view, multilateral instruments such as the IHR and strategies like the Health and Tourism strategy should provide the tools we need for this struggle.

Finally, although PAHO is not the specific venue for addressing the issue of climate change, we cannot ignore it. It is not clear right now to what extent these changes will affect Planet Earth overall, but critical changes in the climate of several regions of the world are already visible, with calamitous consequences for health.

An increase in the frequency and force of meteorological events, the intensification of drought, cold, and heat in several regions of the world, and the wider scale of natural disasters will have a real impact on the response capacity of our surveillance and health systems. We must take steps to mitigate climate change without neglecting the safety and capacity of our hospitals and health systems to respond to the disasters that will inevitably occur.

Ladies and gentlemen, I wish to affirm Brazil's commitment to developing and adopting these strategies. My country is committed to increasing multilateralism and South-South cooperation as a way of facilitating access by the most disadvantaged populations to better instruments to meet their particular health needs.

Notwithstanding our still limited capacity, in order respond to the call of the Director General of WHO, issued during the last World Health Assembly in Geneva in May, my Government agreed to participate in the initiative announced by the U.S. Government on 17 September and to donate part of our national output of influenza A(H1N1) vaccine to WHO to help the more vulnerable countries.

Brazil has a strong faith in PAHO's role as a discussion forum and coordinator of joint initiatives aimed at strengthening regional capacity to combat the diseases that afflict us. PAHO is a key actor in the promotion and dissemination of knowledge, practices, and technologies that, when shared, will create ideal conditions for surmounting our problems, and the Directing Council is the fundamental entity for this sharing.

It should be recalled, however, that PAHO, like every international organization, acts at the demand from its Member States. Remember also that no action decided collectively will be effective without the individual commitment of each Government to its implementation. At the end of the day, each of us is responsible for bringing about these changes.

I wish the next President of the Directing Council every success in conducting this session, and I thank you again for giving Brazil the opportunity to lead this Governing Body.

Have a good meeting and thank you!