



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*

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CD49/DIV/6  
ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

**OPENING REMARKS OF THE SECRETARY OF THE  
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES  
OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,  
HON. KATHLEEN SEBELIUS**

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**49th PAHO Directing Council  
September 28, 2009**

Welcome to the 49th PAHO Directing Council. The United States sincerely appreciates the opportunity to host this meeting. My thanks to all of you for taking the time and effort to travel here.

As the President said in August at the North American Leaders' Summit, "Our common aspirations can only be achieved if we work together, in solidarity, to improve health in the region. The people of this hemisphere expect it from us." At the beginning of this new Administration, I am honored to renew our commitment to the promise of this strategic alliance.

It's a promise that the Pan American Health Organization has made real since its founding as the Pan American Sanitary Bureau in 1902. I am proud that my country has been part of this effort from the beginning.

Let me stop here to congratulate Dr. Roses on appointing Dr. Jon Andrus to her staff. PAHO members know Dr. Andrus as PAHO's Lead Immunization Technical Advisor. In the U.S. we know him as the Director of the Global Health Master's Program at George Washington University right down the street.

With 25 years working in the field of vaccines in developing countries, his appointment as PAHO's deputy director is significant—especially now that 2009-H1N1 influenza is the predominant flu virus worldwide.

The U.S. deeply values our on-the-ground collaboration with PAHO on H1N1 flu. We've been grateful for your openness with regard to surveillance, and how rapidly you've shared information. We've depended on your experience to respond to H1N1 domestically.

We aim to be just as open about sharing what we've learned and in helping you minimize illness and deaths. There is no greater mission than working together to keep our populations safe.

This commitment is the reason we made 10 percent of our vaccine supply available to the World Health Organization, joining Australia, Brazil, Switzerland, New Zealand, Italy, France, Norway, Germany, Japan and the United Kingdom—countries that have either donated vaccine or funded its purchase.

It is why we donated 34 million dollars worth of antiviral medication to the PAHO stockpile earlier this year.

But our commitment to immunization in the Americas is not limited to H1N1 flu. PAHO's regional immunization program is recognized globally for eradicating polio, eliminating measles, and is on the verge of wiping out rubella.

CDC recently signed a five-year, approximately \$24 million agreement to protect these achievements and meet future challenges. Today, I'm pleased to announce an additional \$1.4 million from our health diplomacy program to strengthen national immunization programs in the first year of the agreement.

Our commitment to health is not limited to immunization. Just as President Obama has made the health of every American in the United States a top priority of his Administration, we want to support eliminating health disparities for every American in the northern and southern hemispheres.

The Office of Global Health Affairs is helping fund health worker training in Central America—part of a collaborative effort with PAHO, the Gorgas Memorial Institute, the CDC Central America and Panama Center and two leading U.S. universities.

President Obama is launching a \$63 billion dollar initiative on global health.

The Global Health Initiative will set the highest standards for metrics, monitoring, evaluation and research. It will follow the principles of coordination, sustainability, and women-centered programming. It will make a real commitment to country ownership. It will build on our pledge to fight diseases like malaria and AIDS.

It will place a new emphasis on maternal and child health. Half a million women a year die from pregnancy or pregnancy-related causes.

We are determined to improve health care for women. When women have access to health care and other resources, they invest them in families. Childhood mortality declines. Standards of living rise. Societies thrive.

This is the moment to act. Here in this room, we have so many formidable examples of the power of women. We have Dr. Mirta Roses Periago, the first woman to lead the world's oldest international health agency.

We have Dr. Margaret Chan, who was a leader in fighting the avian flu, and whose strong stewardship in responding to the first global flu pandemic in 40 years may well be the reason we work so cooperatively today. Dr. Chan will long be remembered for her work in combating the H1N1 virus and her unprecedented leadership in focusing on the health of women and girls around the world.

One of my top global priorities here in the U.S. will be to build partnerships that expand our resources and knowledge base in fighting diseases and improving health care both here at home and abroad. I'm very pleased that on Wednesday, many of you will join the top people in my Agency to sign the Letters of Agreement creating the United States-Latin America Cancer Research Network.

The network will link governments, institutions, and researchers to advance cancer research, set up clinical studies and multinational training programs, and increase access to medical technology in the U.S. and Latin America. And, it will focus on breast cancer first.

I hope that I will have a chance to visit with each of you at a reception I will host on Wednesday evening in honor of the 49<sup>th</sup> Directing Council of PAHO. It's a small gesture, but a genuine one, to let you know how much I am looking forward to a close working relationship.

Please accept my sincere wishes for a productive and enjoyable conference, and I hope to see you at the reception.