



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



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CENTENNIAL OF THE PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) is currently midway through a year-long celebration of its Centennial. Information provided by Member States describes the number, variety, and national characteristics of celebratory events being held throughout the Hemisphere. This report provides an update of Centennial activities, a summary of the events that have taken place, and an overview of upcoming global, regional, and local activities.

After several years of planning and input from the entire Organization, the commemorative events are being held not just to celebrate past achievements and future promise, but also to foster existing relationships, create new partnerships, and promote the work and mission of the Organization. The celebrations are reaching a wide variety of audiences—the health sector, the scientific and academic communities, PAHO staff, and the general public—with the message of PAHO achievements and contributions to the health of the peoples of the Americas. The focus is on the work that the Organization has done with the countries of the Americas. Centennial materials and events highlight PAHO's work and mission and are designed to stir the spirit of PAHO staff to recommit to the Organization's goals and mission.

The events discussed in this report are presented to encourage continued participation in Centennial celebrations at Headquarters and throughout the Americas. The report is presented to the Executive Committee for information and comment.

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PAHO Centennial Celebrations: Celebrating 100 Years of Health

1. Centennial Activities to Date

Beginning in December 2001, Member States launched Centennial celebrations involving representatives of the health sector, the media, PAHO staff, the academic and scientific communities, and community organizations. The Director of PAHO has made official visits in connection with Centennial celebrations, and in many countries, national committees comprising representatives of all sectors of society have presented plans for year-long celebrations and activities. Public Health Heroes and Champions of Health of the Americas have been announced, poster and essay contests have been held, and members of the media have been involved in many events. To date, these activities have been very successful in promoting PAHO goals and efforts throughout the Hemisphere.

On 7 January 2002, the Centennial was launched at Headquarters to reignite the spirit of staff members, publicize the year-long event to a broad public, and promote PAHO's work to the media. On that day, the Director of PAHO announced the names of the Public Health Heroes of the Americas: Dr. Carlos Canseco of Mexico, Dr. Jacinto Convit of Venezuela, Dr. Mirna Cunningham of Nicaragua, Dr. Donald A. Henderson of the United States of America, Dr. José Jordán of Cuba, Mr. Marc Lalonde of Canada, Dr. Elsa Moreno of Argentina, Dr. Edgar Mohs of Costa Rica, Dr. Zilda Arns Neumann of Brazil, Dr. Ruth Puffer of the United States, and Sir Kenneth Livingstone Standard of Jamaica. The Public Health Heroes will be involved in events throughout the Centennial year. Awards for these 11 outstanding individuals will be presented on 2 December 2002. The Champions of Health, noted celebrities in their countries, will also carry health messages during the Centennial.

A multimedia campaign is being implemented at all levels of the Organization, and Centennial materials are being used throughout the Region to promote national celebrations. They include posters, press kits, public service announcements, calendars of events, stationery, and commemorative stamps, which have all reflected the centennial brand this year. Centennial graphics are being incorporated into country office Internet websites to create special Centennial web pages. Numerous partners and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) are using the Centennial brand to publicize events they are cosponsoring with PAHO. The idea is for this PAHO brand to symbolize and represent health collaboration and credibility.

The multimedia campaign also involves commemorative exhibits. A 12-panel photo exhibit, developed in collaboration with the United States Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), is entitled "A 100-year Quest for Health in the Americas,

1902-2002.” The exhibit, displayed at the National Library of Medicine and other DHHS venues, commemorates the history of the collaboration between PAHO and the United States. PAHO has also produced a Centennial exhibit for display at the World Health Assembly in Geneva in May.

An integral part of the Centennial campaign is a series of 52 health features developed for use by the print and broadcast media during each week of the Centennial year. These press releases, sent via html e-mail, provide direct links to information and photographs via the PAHO Centennial Internet website, www.paho.org/100. In addition, monthly radio spots and public service announcements for television are being aired throughout the Region to a broad general audience.

2. Regionwide Activities

The Centennial Handbook, developed by PAHO and distributed throughout the Hemisphere, calls for three specific activities to be carried out in each country: participation in the poster, essay, and journalism contests; selection of Public Health Heroes and Champions of Health to carry health messages to the people; and celebration of events on the actual anniversary, 2 December 2002. These activities, which are adaptable to the national cultures, provide a framework for the Regionwide, year-long celebration.

The poster and essay contests, designed to involve children and adolescents in the celebrations, have been very successful. Discovery Communications, Inc., donated two computers for the winners and advertised the contests throughout Latin America for a month before the deadline for entries. Each country provided the winners of their contests to Headquarters as the entries into the regional contests. The regional winner of each contest will receive US\$ 500, a computer, and a certificate of appreciation. The winning poster and essay will be posted on the PAHO Centennial Internet website and the winners will be announced in press releases throughout the Hemisphere.

As part of the Pan American Health Reporting Contest, print journalists in the Region have submitted articles about public health. The countries submitted their winners as entries into the Pan American Health Reporting Contest. The winner will be awarded a prize of \$3,000 at the end of September in a ceremony at Headquarters, during the Pan American Sanitary Conference.

The selection of national Public Health Heroes and Champions of Health has taken place in most Member States, and many countries have involved these individuals in launches of Centennial activities.

A series of scientific meetings being held to commemorate the Centennial includes:

- Science, Health, and Development: Achievements and Challenges at PAHO's 100th Year, in conjunction with the meeting of the Advisory Committee on Health Research, Washington, D.C., 12-14 June 2002;
- Health Promotion Forum in the Americas, Santiago, Chile, 20-24 October 2002;
- 28th Inter-American Congress of AIDIS (*Asociación Interamericana de Ingeniería Sanitaria y Ambiental*), Cancún, Mexico, 27 October-1 November 2002;
- Fourth Global Forum on Research Bioethics, Brasília, Brazil, 29-31 October 2002; and
- International Conference on the Application of Vaccines against Viral, Rickettsial, and Bacterial Diseases of Man, Washington, D.C., 25-27 November 2002.

On 2 December, celebrations will range from cultural events with national symphony orchestras to the inauguration of a Health Park to provide recreational space in the center of an urban city. Sporting events, press conferences, gala celebrations, official receptions, formal ceremonies in houses of government, popular artists' concerts, presentations of awards to Public Health Heroes and Champions of Health, and ecumenical services are also planned.

3. Country Activities

The scope of country activities that have taken place is extremely broad. The office of the PAHO/World Health Organization (WHO) Representative in Ecuador received a plaque from the National Council on Health in honor of PAHO's Centennial and the Organization's technical assistance and collaborative efforts to improve the public health of all Ecuadorians. Graduates with the highest honors in public health from various universities in the Dominican Republic are receiving special PAHO Centennial awards with their diplomas. The municipal government in the city of El Alto in the department of La Paz, Bolivia, designated the area a PAHO Centennial district. The city government and the office of the PAHO/WHO Representative have launched a project in the *Distrito Centenario* to improve the health and quality of life of the poor population of this urban zone.

Numerous health fairs, festivals, and rallies are taking place. In the Caribbean, the Centennial Quilt, designed as a symbol of cooperation in health program initiatives, is being displayed throughout the subregion at most Centennial events. In the lobby of the United Nations building in Ecuador, a space has been designated “The Centennial Corner,” and provides information to staff and visitors. Postal authorities in many Member States are issuing commemorative stamps that bear the Centennial logo. Exhibits of historic photographs are being displayed in government offices and other official spaces. Many countries are preparing commemorative publications about the history of PAHO in their country. In El Salvador, PAHO, the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare, and the municipality of Acajutla are participating in a joint project to build a Centennial village of 100 houses on a site that was devastated by the earthquakes. In Suriname, PAHO and the Ministry of Education launched a joint initiative for “100 Smoke-Free Schools” to encourage 100 schools to adopt smoke-free environment policies for teachers and students. The Inter-religious Committee in Suriname is training 100 community health promoters; 100-meter swimming events are taking place; and PAHO staff members are charting every 100 calories they burn through physical exercise.

Many countries are working with the media to promote the Centennial. In Guatemala, *Nuestro Diario*, the newspaper with the largest circulation in the country and the one most accessible to the poorest populations, has launched the “Living Healthy” campaign, and a total of 50 articles on health topics will be published throughout the year. Newspapers in other countries are sponsoring Centennial essay and poster contests for young people, and many reporters from newspapers throughout the Hemisphere are participating in the Pan American Health Reporting Contest.

4. Special Meetings

Member States are holding international meetings to commemorate the Centennial. They include:

- 8th International Conference of the University of West Indies Diabetes Outreach Project (UDOP) on Diabetes and Obesity, sponsored by PAHO, Ocho Rios, Jamaica, 7-10 March 2002;
- LIDERES 2002, an international managers course on health, disasters, and development, cosponsored by the Ministry of Health and the ISALUD Foundation, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 1-18 April 2002;
- “Diabetes: A Challenge for All” Symposium, El Paso, Texas, 5 April 2002;
- First National Health Congress, Sucre, Bolivia, 23-25 April 2002;

- International Convention of Public Health 2002, Havana, Cuba, 1-3 May 2002;
- National Congress for Health and Life, Quito, Ecuador, 8-10 May 2002;
- Special events in honor of the 60th anniversary of the PAHO/WHO Field Office, US-Mexico Border, in El Paso and the PAHO Centennial at the annual United States-Mexico Border Health Association (USMBHA) meeting, Chihuahua, Mexico, 4-6 June 2002;
- Two Centennial celebrations in Peru, one in the interior with indigenous communities and the other in Lima, 7-8 June 2002;
- Cultural Tribute to Health (televised event) featuring major entertainers in celebration of the Centennial, Kingston, Jamaica, 3-5 November 2002; and
- XVI Latin American Congress of Microbiology, VI Cuban Congress of Microbiology and Parasitology, and III National Congress of Tropical Medicine, Havana, Cuba, 11-15 November 2002.

In response to requests from groups in several Member States, a special Centennial meeting kit has been developed to assist conference planners, which includes a CD-ROM containing Centennial graphics; a six-minute video produced by PAHO that shows the Organization's work, its history, and its accomplishments; and a proclamation signed by the Director of PAHO designating the specific event as an official part of the Centennial celebrations. Response to the kit has been excellent.

5. Additional Activities

The Organization has planned and implemented events at Headquarters that are varied and appeal to all PAHO audiences. Three separate exhibits of PAHO photographs will be displayed. On 6 April, in honor of World Health Day, the sixth annual Walk for Health was held and a time capsule containing predictions for the future of public health in 2052 was buried in part of the plaza surrounding Headquarters, which is now known as "Centennial Plaza."

Other special activities at Headquarters include:

- Release of a commemorative book of photographs at the end of June 2002 that tells the story of 100 years of health in pictures from the entire Region;
- Release of the *Quadrennial Report of the Director and Health in the Americas*, at the Pan American Sanitary Conference in September; and

- Marking of the anniversary of the Organization with two days of special events, 2-3 December, which include a formal scientific program; a dinner and awards program for the Public Health Heroes of the Americas; and a partnership meeting.

Many other events are being held in honor of the Centennial. In Washington, D.C., the Organization of American States produced a live one-hour broadcast of their regular webcast series, “Today in the Americas/*Despejando Dudas*”; the show was entitled, “Health Concerns after September 11: PAHO’s Role.” Organizations that work closely with PAHO are holding Centennial events. These include a U.S. congressional briefing on bioterrorism; a keynote address by Dr. George A. O. Alleyne and reception sponsored by the Global Health Council; a special Centennial event in conjunction with the annual (60th anniversary) USMBHA meeting; an address by Dr. Alleyne at an event sponsored by the American Association of Public Health at its annual meeting in Philadelphia, Pa.; and a reunion in Washington, D.C., of the Association of Former PAHO/WHO Employees. The 55th World Health Assembly in Geneva will adopt a resolution on the Centennial and will hold a reception during its May session.

6. Action by the Executive Committee

The Centennial events are designed to inspire those working in the public health field to redouble their efforts to bring health to all of the peoples of the Americas. The celebration is also designed to promote the mission and vision of the Organization among the general public and the many people PAHO serves. The Executive Committee is asked to take note of and comment on activities undertaken and events planned for the Centennial.