



## PAHO Hosts Conference on Sustainable Development

Ministers of health, the environment, and finance came together with representatives of international and nongovernmental organizations to discuss the interactions among health, environmental quality, and development. The Pan American Conference on Health and Environment in Sustainable Human Development took place at PAHO Headquarters from 1 to 3 October 1995, following the close of the XXXVIII Meeting of the PAHO Directing Council and the Special Meeting on Health Sector Reform (see p. 361), both of which had been attended by many of the conference participants. These three meetings allowed for high-level discussion of important influences on human development.

The conference was cosponsored by PAHO/WHO, the Organization of American States, the United Nations Development Program, the United Nations Environment Program, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the World Bank. Its overall purpose was to define policies, strategies, and actions that will help the countries to fulfill the political commitments made at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in 1992 (as spelled out in the Declaration of Rio de Janeiro and Agenda 21), at the Summit of the Americas in 1994, and in other regional and subregional agreements. The conference offered the opportunity for a dialog between those responsible for assigning public sector

resources and those in charge of two key social sectors, so that development strategies may incorporate and clearly reflect social objectives.

As Dr. George A.O. Alleyne, PAHO's Director, pointed out in his remarks at the opening ceremony, definitive answers could not be expected to result from a three-day meeting. The conference was a continuation of the process begun in Rio and should be viewed, he said, as merely "the end of the beginning"; the real work would be done in the countries in the coming months and years.

In addition to Dr. Alleyne, representatives of the other sponsoring agencies spoke at the opening ceremony. Their remarks were followed by a presentation by Mr. Ismail Serageldin, the World Bank's Vice President for Environmentally Sustainable Development, who suggested that sustainable development should be defined as "giving future generations as much or more capital per person than we have today." He pointed out that there are four kinds of capital: man-made, natural, social, and human. Most of the wealth of nations resides in human and social capital, and countries had to recognize the need to invest in those types.

At the close of the inaugural ceremony, Dr. Alleyne read a message sent to the meeting by Al Gore, Jr., Vice President of the United States of America, who wished the participants success in their endeavors.

The body of the meeting consisted of seven panels discussions and six special presentations by distinguished invited speakers. Among those experts were Dr. Abraham Horwitz, Director Emeritus of PAHO, who spoke on human development from the health perspective; Mr. Maurice Strong, President of the Earth Council and Secretary General of UNCED, who gave the environmental perspective and discussed progress since the 1992 Rio conference; and Dr. Robert Watson, Associate Director for the Environment, Executive Office of the President of the United States of America, who described global environmental trends and their projected future impact.

The final special presentation was delivered by President José María Figueres of Costa Rica. He said that achieving sustainable human development required progress in four areas—economic, social, environmental, and political—all of which had an impact on health. He reiterated the message that investment in a country's human capital was essential.

During the closing ceremony of the meeting, the Pan American Charter on Health and Environment in Sustainable Human Development was read. It details policy and strategy principles for protecting health and preventing environmental degradation. The Charter lists seven priorities that the countries of the Americas share, despite differences in their needs and resources; these priorities include improvement of monitoring and surveillance mechanisms to identify hazards to health and the environment and increased dissemination of scientific and technical knowledge. It also outlines the responsibilities of all individuals and of different segments and institutions in society toward the achievement of sustainable development. The Charter ends with these words: "Facing conditions and trends that threaten to expand human misery and inequity, urgent and continuing action to promote health and protect the environment through sustainable development is our responsibility: each of us—all of us."



## First Ladies of the Americas Meet in Paraguay

The Fifth Conference of First Ladies of the Americas took place in Asunción, Paraguay, from 16 to 20 October 1995. Following up on discussions at their Fourth Conference (Saint Lucia, October 1994) and at the symposium on children held in conjunction with the Summit of the Americas (Miami, December 1994), the subject of this conference was the health and education of women and children.

Within the area of health, several specific topics were addressed: childhood

immunization and the campaign to eliminate measles from the Americas, prevention of drug use among street children, reduction of maternal morbidity and mortality, prevention of early pregnancy, the fight against cancer, and the problem of violence against women. Presentations providing background on each topic were made by representatives of international organizations or NGOs; they were followed by addresses by one or more of the First Ladies. PAHO staff members introduced the discussions on measles

elimination, maternal mortality, and violence against women, and also reported on PAHO collaboration aimed at improving the health of women and children. Personnel from PAHO had also assisted national delegations with technical orientation on some of these topics at a preparatory meeting held in July.

At the close of the meeting, the First Ladies adopted the Declaration of Paraguay, which expressed their collective determination to continue working to improve the health and education of women and children in the hemisphere. Among the intentions they declared were the following:

- To support the implementation, in keeping with each country's national interest and legislation, of the agreements and recommendations of recent international forums—the World

Summit on Children (New York, 1990), the United Nations International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994), the Summit of the Americas (Miami, 1994), the United Nations World Summit on Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995), and the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995).

- To contribute to achievement of the goal of measles elimination in the Americas by the year 2000.
- To contribute to the prevention and elimination of all forms of violence against women and children through regulatory means and other mechanisms.

The First Ladies plan to hold their Sixth Conference in Bolivia in 1996.



## Course in Meat and Poultry Inspection Held for Caribbean Area

Twenty-two public health inspectors from throughout the English-speaking Caribbean participated in the First Training Course in Meat and Poultry Inspection for the Caribbean, which was held at the University of the West Indies' (UWI) Department of Preventive Medicine in Kingston, Jamaica, from 31 July to 25 Au-

gust 1995. The course, cosponsored by PAHO/WHO, UWI, and the Jamaican Ministries of Health and Agriculture, was the first such training ever made available locally.

In addition to reviewing the traditional approaches to meat and poultry inspection, the course provided participants with up-to-date information about foodborne diseases, including those caused by emerging bacterial pathogens. Also discussed were advances in the investigation and surveillance of foodborne diseases and application of the hazard analysis critical control points (HACCP) system. This emphasis reinforced the

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Sources: (1) Meat and poultry inspection training course. *CCH Update* 1995;8(2):7. (2) Syllabus—1st Training Course in Meat and Poultry Inspection for the Caribbean, 31 July–25 August 1995, Kingston, Jamaica. Washington, DC: PAHO, Division of Communicable Disease Prevention and Control, Veterinary Public Health Program; 1995.

concept of an integrated approach to food protection at all stages—production, transport, distribution, processing, and consumption.

The practical sessions and case studies focused on identifying hazards in the food supply chain. Critical control points were specified and assessed, and the practical problems involved in monitoring and verifying them were discussed.

Over the past 10 years, PAHO/WHO has sponsored a number of inspectors from the English-speaking Caribbean to receive training at the United States Department of Agriculture's Food Safety and Inspection Service (FSIS) Training Center

in Texas, U.S.A. The training provided there is of high quality, but it is designed to fulfill the needs of the FSIS. Therefore, once the trainees returned to their own countries, where slaughterhouse conditions are quite different, they reported that they did not have much opportunity to apply what they had learned.

The subregional course represents a cost-effective educational alternative to training inspectors abroad. In addition, conducting the training within the settings where the inspectors actually work is a more practical way to meet their needs and expectations.



## *Disasters and Health Facilities*

PAHO/WHO is organizing a conference that will address ways to reduce the vulnerability of health sector infrastructure to damage from earthquakes and hurricanes. The International Conference on Disaster Mitigation in Health Facilities, which will be held in Mexico City from 26 to 28 February 1996, will formulate a regional policy on disaster mitigation for health facilities in Latin America and the Caribbean. In addition, guidelines will be presented for developing cost-effective interventions, comprehensive national programs, and national mitigation plans for hospitals. Several national, regional, and international organizations are cosponsoring the conference, and participants will include multisectoral specialists and government officials.

The conference will be conducted in Spanish and English, with interpretation provided for the plenary sessions. Optional field visits will be arranged on 29 February.

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