



Organización
Panamericana
de la Salud



Organización
Mundial de la Salud
OFICINA REGIONAL PARA LAS Américas

55th DIRECTING COUNCIL

68th SESSION OF THE WHO REGIONAL COMMITTEE FOR THE AMERICAS

Washington, D.C., USA, from 26 to 30 September of 2016

CD54/DIV/6
Original: Spanish

**OPENING REMARKS BY MR. FERDINANDO REGALIA
SOCIAL PROTECTION AND HEALTH DIVISION CHIEF
INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK**

**OPENING REMARKS BY MR. FERDINANDO REGALIA
SOCIAL PROTECTION AND HEALTH DIVISION CHIEF
INTER-AMERICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK**

**26 September of 2016
Washington, D.C.**

**55th Directing Council of PAHO
68th session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Americas**

Excellency, Dr. Elvia Violeta Menjívar, Minister of Health of El Salvador,
Outgoing president of the Directing Council,
Excellency, Dr. Carissa F. Etienne, Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau,
Excellency, Dr. Margaret Chan, Director General of the World Health Organization,
Excellency, Ms. Ideli Salvatti, Secretary for Access to Rights and Equity of the
Organization of American States,
Excellency, Ms. Sylvia Mathews Burwell, Secretary of the Department of Health and
Human Services of the United States of America,
Excellencies, Authorities of the Member States:

Thanks to support from PAHO, the countries of Latin American and the Caribbean have implemented processes of change and health sector reform which have made the Americas a worldwide leader in terms of longevity. These changes have helped reduce infant mortality to the lowest in the developing world, and have done so at a faster pace than in other regions.

However, the next part of the journey is not going to be easy. First, health systems frequently face crises related to outbreaks, natural disasters, the effects of climate change, and economic shocks that impact public finances.

Second, countries face more of an uphill climb because of constant pressure and growing needs for services due to aging populations, non-communicable diseases and their risk factors, the introduction of new technologies, and the population's demand for better quality services.

Given these challenges, and a macroeconomic forecast that does not portend the availability of more financial resources for health in the short term, we must find ways to ensure the sustainability of health systems without jeopardizing the gains we have already made in health.

Given this context, it is essential that one of the central themes of this Directing Council be the development of resilient health systems and resilient societies. This

means that all involved in health—health workers, institutions, and populations—must be prepared to effectively respond to crises, keep basic functions going when they occur, and reorganize themselves based on lessons learned when conditions demand it.

At the Bank we have made it a priority to support countries as they develop resilient health systems, by fostering policies aimed at inclusive and sustained economic growth, human development, and society's engagement in government. These are the prerequisites for protecting health systems and ensuring they are robust, responsive, and people-centered.

We also deem it essential to continue collaborating with PAHO in support of the countries of the region, in order to consolidate and accelerate progress in strategic areas which constitute the keys to resilient health systems, particularly:

- Promoting more equitable systems to finance health, which protect people financially and promote quality through stable contribution systems, greater pooling of funds, and procurement systems which foster the availability of high quality health services;
- Creating systematic, legitimate decision-making processes regarding the provision of publicly funded health technologies, based on rigorous evidence. The institutions in charge of evaluating, regulating, and purchasing these technologies, particularly high-cost ones, must be strengthened. This goes hand-in-hand with efforts to improve prescription practices to ensure they are appropriate, ethical, and based on rational use;
- Strengthening the primary health care approach, in the context of a comprehensive network of high-quality service providers;
- Consolidating the ability of health authorities to exercise sound leadership, with emphasis on bolstering the role of health intelligence and facilitating the development of multisectoral strategies;
- Applying the International Health Regulations by strengthening essential public health functions.

I wish the Directing Council the best of success in its work, and I reaffirm the commitment of the Bank to support the member countries as they implement the decisions made during this meeting.

Thank you very much.

- - - -