



**Pan American
Health
Organization**



**World Health
Organization**
REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE
Americas

29th PAN AMERICAN SANITARY CONFERENCE
69th SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE OF WHO FOR THE AMERICAS

Washington, D.C., USA, 25-29 September 2017

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**CLOSING REMARKS BY DR. CARISSA F. ETIENNE
DIRECTOR OF THE PAN AMERICAN SANITARY BUREAU
AND REGIONAL DIRECTOR FOR THE AMERICAS OF THE
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION**

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**29 September 2017
Washington, D.C.**

**29th Pan American Sanitary Conference
69th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Americas**

Honorable President of the 29th Pan American Sanitary Conference,
Dr. Antonio Barrios, Minister of Health of Paraguay,
Honorable Ministers and Secretaries of Health of PAHO-WHO Member States of the
Pan American Health Organization
Distinguished Member State Delegates,
Eminent Members of the Diplomatic Corps,
Representatives of Nongovernmental Organizations in formal relations with the
Pan American Health Organization,
Representatives of the United Nations and Other Specialized Agencies,
Fellow PAHO and WHO colleagues,
Honored guests,
Esteemed Ladies and Gentlemen:

A Very Good Morning To You All.

Wow! We have come to the end of an incredible week, as all good things must.

Before proceeding further, however, I wish to pause for a moment of reflection as it is with profound humility that I would once again like to express my sincerest thanks and gratitude to you- the Member States- for the confidence and trust that you have invested in me and for re-electing me to the post of Director of the Pan American Health Organization for a second term.

I stand before you this morning recognizing that there will be rough seas to navigate and some still higher mountains to climb over the next five years as we press forward to achieve those loftier goals of the 2030 Sustainable Health Development Agenda and the newly approved Sustainable Health Agenda for the Americas 2018-2030. However, despite this, I am very confident and can state unreservedly that together and in solidarity we will be able to reach these higher goals.

As I close this 29th Pan American Sanitary Conference and 69th Session of the Regional Committee of WHO for the Americas, I believe that I can say without fear of contradiction that we have had a resoundingly successful week.

Under the expert leadership of the President of this Conference-the Honorable Minister of Health of Paraguay-we reviewed 52 agenda items; we analyzed and discussed 53 documents; and we negotiated and approved 16 resolutions. You provided judicious advice and guidance to the Bureau as you deliberated on some key plans of action, including those for strengthening Vital Statistics and Tobacco Control and for Sustaining Measles, Rubella and Congenital Rubella Syndrome Elimination in the Americas. You debated the policy on Ethnicity and Health as well as the strategy on Human Resources for Universal Access to Health and Universal Health Coverage. You frequently underscored the critical need for reducing inequities in this most inequitable Region of the world. You were apprised of the challenges presented by the global shortage of inactivated polio vaccine for the polio End Game Strategy. Of course, you repeatedly called attention to the imperative need for addressing, without delay, the issue of climate change and its effects as a matter of priority.

Distinguished Delegates, you have all been able to assess the quality of my stewardship of the Organization during the past five years as you perused the quinquennial report-2013 to 2017 and reviewed the photographic exhibition of our achievements.

You have collectively signaled your appreciation for the increased collaboration of PASB with you- the Member States- in arriving at consensus on important matters in advance of our Governing Bodies Meetings. Examples of this intensified teamwork can be cited in the use of a Consultative Working Group for the development of the Sustainable Health Agenda for the Americas; the bottom-up prioritization exercise undertaken by the Member States, the results of which have formed the basis for development of the budget that you have just approved; and the extensive consultations with Member States and other experts whose collective wisdom contributed to the development of our 2017 flagship publication, Health In the Americas Plus.

Dr. Barrios, I thank you most kindly for the efficient execution of your responsibilities as the President of this 2017 Sanitary Conference.

Additionally, I wish to convey my sincerest thanks to the WHO Director General, Dr. Tedros, for the time that he spent with us and for providing a clear vision as he spoke on topics and issues such as climate change, the 13th WHO Global Program of Work, global health security, the need to achieve universal health for all and the challenges that we must overcome in the fight against the non-communicable diseases.

You were able to listen to your fellow colleague Ministers as well as to other experts as they discussed key issues ranging from climate change and health to efforts to reduce inequities, and to strengthen the health services for improved management of NCDs at the seven side events that were convened.

We have all greatly appreciated your words of commiseration regarding the lives lost, the overwhelming dislocation and the tremendous devastation occasioned in relation to the recent earthquakes and hurricanes that ravaged many of our Member States including my own-Dominica. I would like to personally applaud the efforts of the Minister of Health of the Bahamas for being here, despite the tremendous challenges currently faced by his country as well as those that he encountered in getting here.

Member States, I owe you all a significant debt of gratitude for your continued energetic engagement with the Bureau and with each other. Your unstinting support, your prudent advice and astute guidance are highly appreciated and valued. On behalf of the Bureau, I do look forward to an even stronger partnership as we move forward over the next five years.

Finally, I would like to convey my heartfelt thanks and gratitude to each and every member of staff for their sustained and steadfast service, for their unwavering commitment to our vision and mission and their consistent adherence to our values.

To those who were actively involved in the exhaustive pre-planning and preparatory arrangements for this conference -The Office of Governing Bodies, including the translation Services; the Office of General Services; the Communications Department; and my Office, among others- I extend a warm and special thank you as it is your collective work that has guaranteed the successful outcome of this conference.

To those who have worked tirelessly during the week, such as the interpreters, the photographers, the Deputy Director, the staff from the Country and Sub-Regional Cooperation, who assisted with the 18 bilateral meetings that I had with Member State delegations since 23rd September, and to Arelis Velasquez, who has so ably presided over our tea and coffee service, I would like to convey my sincerest gratitude and appreciation.

Today, I wish all of you a very safe return journey to your respective homes and countries. To those who will return to countries and territories ravaged by earthquakes and Hurricanes Irma and Maria, I would like you to know that we stand in solidarity with you as you rebuild lives, homes, livelihoods, the physical infrastructure and the mental health of your peoples. I pray that God will keep you in His Care and Grace.

Thank you very much and goodbye.
Muchisimas gracias y hasta luego.
Merci beaucoup et au revoir.
Muito obrigado a ate logo.

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