



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



52nd DIRECTING COUNCIL
65th SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE

Washington, D.C., USA, 30 September-4 October 2013

CD52/DIV/6 (Eng.)
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

**OPENING REMARKS BY THE OUTGOING PRESIDENT
OF THE PAHO DIRECTING COUNCIL**

**Delivered by Dr. Félix Bonilla, on behalf
of Dr. Javier Antonio Díaz González de Mendoza
Minister of Health of Panama**

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**52nd Directing Council of PAHO
65th Session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Americas**

Dr. Carissa F. Etienne, Director of the
Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)
Honorable Ministers of Health
Distinguished delegates and members of the diplomatic corps
Ladies and Gentlemen,

As President of the 51st PAHO Directing Council and the 65th session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Americas, I want to extend to you my most fraternal greeting and to thank PAHO for allowing us the opportunity to participate and work with the Member States. I urge you to continue working to overcome the challenges to health in each of our territories.

Before starting the day's agenda, I would like to share some thoughts:

Health is based on values, principles, and elements such as the right to health, social justice, solidarity, citizen participation, equity, an intersectoral approach, and universal coverage. This means ensuring that the entire population has access to the necessary health services: prevention, promotion, treatment, recovery, rehabilitation, and palliative care, within the framework of renewed primary health care, while developing financial and social mechanisms for coverage, competent human resources, and a health system strengthened by integrated networks that deliver organized and efficiently coordinated services, providing drugs, medical and surgical supplies, and safe, effective, and appropriate technologies. This means that health authorities must increasingly strengthen health care systems by guaranteeing the right to health, while striving to close the historical gaps in health and reduce out-of-pocket expenditures, and through surveillance and regulation of the established standards in our countries.

We have worked on important issues, including, among others:

- The Millennium Development Goals and the health goals in the Region of the Americas
- Implementation of the WHO Framework Convention for Tobacco Control

- Strategy and Plan of Action for the Elimination of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV and Congenital Syphilis
- Regional Plan for Strengthening Vital and Health Statistics
- Plan of Action on Psychoactive Substance Use and Public Health
- Expansion of health coverage
- Improvements to water quality and environmental sanitation

Consultations with the countries—whose teams consulted with the corresponding authorities and sectors—contributed to the process of identifying the regional priorities stated in the new PAHO Strategic Plan and the Program and Budget for 2014-2015, with a view to achieving goals that seek to include the determinants of health as a linchpin in all their components, enabling us to focus interventions to address current and future challenges in the Region of the Americas.

All PAHO member countries have capacities that facilitate the exchange of knowledge and experiences, leading to the development of sustainable public health policies in order for all countries to be more effective and efficient when seeking positive impacts on their populations.

I would like to emphasize PAHO's role and the work it is doing to address the main health problems in our Region: guiding policies that enable us to advance together as we build our health systems; facilitating and supporting local, national, and regional initiatives; fostering the sharing of experiences, knowledge development, and scientific and technological innovation, with a view to boosting the capabilities of health workers and the opportunities to offer better, comprehensive health services.

We appeal for the continued strengthening of partnerships within the framework of international cooperation among PAHO member countries.

Finally, I want to thank all of you who have helped me during my term. I hope we will continue working with the same positive attitude we have seen so far in this big family: the Pan American Health Organization.

My sincerest gratitude to the whole team,

Thank you.