

Dr. Carissa F. Etienne acceptance speech – Jan 2018 WHO EB

Good morning! Chair of the Executive Board, EB Members, Member State Representatives, Director General of WHO Tedros, fellow Regional Directors, WHO colleagues, external partners; ladies and gentlemen...

Let me begin by thanking the Member States of PAHO for their unanimous decision to have me serve them as Director of PAHO for a second term. I also wish to thank the Executive Board for re-appointing me to serve as Regional Director of the WHO Regional Office for the Americas.

The next five years will be critical for my Region and for the global health agenda, as we move forward under Dr Tedros' leadership to realize the vision of a healthier, safer world, where all citizens receive the health care they need.

Last year I presented to PAHO Member States an account of the achievements of the Organization over the past five years, as well as my priorities for the next five. I would like to highlight for you some of what I said last September:

- In terms of **Outbreaks and Emergencies**, PAHO successfully led preparedness and response efforts to the Zika and chikungunya epidemics, the Ebola threat, cholera in Haiti, and the yellow fever outbreak in Brazil.
- Responses were mounted within 48 hours to all declared emergencies and disasters in the Region. As you are aware our Region unfortunately suffered many major disasters in recent years.
- In the area of the **Communicable Diseases**:

- Endemic measles, neonatal tetanus, rubella and congenital rubella syndrome were eliminated in the Region.
- Onchocerciasis was eliminated in four of six endemic countries, and trachoma in one country.
- Seven countries and territories in our Region achieved elimination of mother-to-child transmission of HIV and congenital syphilis; several others are close to elimination.
- A number of countries are close to malaria elimination certification.
- **In Non-communicable Diseases**
 - 30 out of 35 PAHO Member States are party to the FCTC, and notable progress has been made in implementation of related policies and legislation.
 - Four countries passed legislation on the labelling of food products.
 - Three countries adopted taxes on sugar-sweetened beverages at the national level.
- **In Health Systems**
 - Deliveries by skilled birth attendants increased from 95% to nearly 100%.
 - 25 countries have comprehensive financing strategies for universal health coverage.
 - For the first time, the Region of the Americas reached the recommended target of 25 physicians and nurses per 10,000 people.
- **For access to medicines**

- 41 countries and territories now participate in the Revolving Fund, which allows them to procure high-quality life-saving vaccines and related products at the lowest price.
- 30 countries use the Strategic Fund, which facilitates pooled procurement of essential medicines and strategic health supplies.
- In terms of strengthening **PAHO as an institution**
 - PAHO has expanded its investment in countries and sub-regions, making country focus real and tangible.
 - In a major advance for corporate accountability, the first-ever joint assessment of organizational performance was undertaken with PAHO Member States for the 2014-15 biennium, and will be done again for 2016-2017.
 - Systematic and comprehensive program planning and prioritization was conducted with all PAHO Member States, as a part of the joint planning and budgeting process in the Region.

Looking forward to the **next five years**, my top 10 priorities are to:

1. Advance **universal health coverage and universal access**, through resilient health systems based on the primary health care approach and targeting the underserved.
2. Promote a renewed focus on **equitable health for all**: with particular emphasis on women and children, ethnic groups, indigenous populations, and persons living in conditions of vulnerability.

3. Ensure that all countries can meet and sustain their obligations under the **International Health Regulations (IHR)**.
4. Catalyze multi-sectoral and multidisciplinary efforts and responses to **antimicrobial resistance** in the Americas.
5. Move forward with **elimination of communicable diseases**: expanding the number of countries certifying elimination of malaria, tuberculosis, and neglected tropical diseases; working towards elimination of HIV transmission in the Region by 2030; and expanding vector-control initiatives.
6. I will work to ensure the Region is on course to **reduce NCD mortality** by 25% by 2025.
7. Advocate to improve the **determinants of health** through multi-sectoral approaches; and lead the regional health sector response to **climate change**.
8. Further increase **access to quality, affordable medicines** across the Region.
9. Ensure that the Region is on track to achieve all **Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) #3** targets; and the health-related targets in other SDGs.
10. Continue **institutional strengthening** and **building financial sustainability** for the future.

All of the above must be done in the context of the new WHO GPW which you are discussing this week, as well as the Sustainable Health Agenda for the Americas 2030, and of course the overarching framework of the SDGs.

This year we commemorate the 40th anniversary of Alma Ata. In the intervening years much progress has been achieved. We now have a new call to action, the Sustainable Development Goals, which set out ambitious aims for the year 2030, including SDG3: “Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages”. In seeking to meet this challenge, we must learn the lessons of Alma Ata: that barriers to access must be systematically identified and removed; that fragmentation and segmentation of health services is a recipe for failure; that social participation at the grassroots level is a prerequisite for success; that national governments must lead and own the process towards universal health, in coordination with partners; and last but not least that universal means universal, there can be no excuses and no half-measures when it comes to providing all necessary health services to all people.

The Americas Region is in a strong overall position in terms of health services access and coverage. Therefore, as this Region looks to contribute to the new WHO General Programme of Work goal of “1 billion more people benefitting from universal health coverage”, the focus in our Region must be to address inequities in health. We must target the underserved with differentiated interventions that reach the most vulnerable, poor and marginalized members of our societies. For the next five years, this will be a cornerstone of PAHO’s work.

I am full of confidence as we face the challenges of the next five years. This confidence is based on what I know to be the great capacity and strong performance of the countries of the Americas, as well as the tireless dedication of PAHO and WHO staff. I offer you my personal commitment to ensure the maximum possible synergies between PAHO and WHO as we seek to implement our joint agenda.

Thank you and may God bless you and your families with good health and good fortune throughout 2018!