

Editorial

THE OPENING OF A NEW DECADE

by **Dr. Héctor R. Acuña**

Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau

During the year 1980 the Ten-Year Health Plan for the Americas conceived at Santiago in 1972 ended, its successes and failures were analyzed, lessons were drawn from them, and the Americas started out toward a new and difficult but not impossible goal of attaining health for all by the end of this century.

Within the process of achieving the goal of health for all by the year 2000, basic national and regional health strategies were worked out and, in many countries, put into effect. Those strategies are predicated on certain fundamental concepts on whose validity health care specialists around the world generally agree. Outstanding among them are those promoting primary care in order to upgrade levels of well-being and extend health services to all people; the participation of the community in health sector matters; the use of technologies appropriate to local conditions; and the necessity of technical cooperation among developing countries—and between them and the international organizations at their service. Equally important are strategies emphasizing the role of women as consumers and providers of health care.

Attaining the goal of health for all by the year 2000, as defined by the Hemisphere's countries, has obvious but far-reaching implications for economic and social development. In our view it must be regarded not as an isolated sectoral objective but as part of the broader goal that the governments have already endorsed in the United Nations by establishing the New International Development Strategy, the New International Economic Order, and the War on Extreme Poverty. Whether the goal can be attained depends upon the extent to which governments introduce changes in their approaches and their systems, as well as upon many technical and economic factors and, more importantly, on political conditions and social situations. It is also necessary to strengthen the dialogue between the social and production sectors, a dialogue which, though long recognized as important, has been delayed by a series of situations to the detriment of the very purpose of development.

For PAHO, 1980 marked a transition from earlier—and what now seem quite conventional—ways of carrying out its mission to new and often experimental modes of technical cooperation with its member countries. Long and careful thought went into elaborating these new strategies, which now offer the possibility of providing all citizens of the Americas with adequate health care by the year 2000.