



Sir George Alleyne Elected Director of PAHO

The XXIV Pan American Sanitary Conference elected Sir George Alleyne, M.D. F.R.C.P., F.A.C.P. (Hon.), D.Sc. (Hon.), to be the next Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau, the executive agency of the Pan American Health Organization. The unanimous election took place at the fifth plenary session of the Conference on 28 September 1994.

Born in St. Philip, Barbados, in 1932, Sir George is a medical graduate of the University of the West Indies in Jamaica. He received postgraduate training in internal medicine in Great Britain before returning to the University Hospital in Jamaica, where he spent eight years studying childhood nutrition and renal metabolism and disorders. He was appointed Professor of Medicine at the University of the West Indies in 1972 and four years later became Chairman of the University's Department of Medicine.

He joined PAHO in 1981 as Chief of the Research Unit, and in 1983 was appointed Director of Health Programs Development. Since 1990 Sir George has served as the Assistant Director of PAHO, supervising its 28 field offices and technical cooperation activities, as well as the technical programs on emergency preparedness and disaster relief and women in health and development. He has participated in formulating and directing PAHO's policies, taking a special interest in program development and evaluation.

Sir George is the recipient of numerous academic and medical science awards. In 1990 he was made Knight Bachelor by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth "for services to medicine."

Below is the body of the speech delivered to the Conference by Sir George after his election as Director.

ADDRESS BY SIR GEORGE ALLEYNE

. . . . It is natural and normal to expect every new director to speak of the changes to be introduced in his or her term of office. I am proud to have served in senior positions in the administration of Dr. Carlyle Guerra de Macedo, to whom I owe much, and I have the self-confidence and, I am sure, the agreement of this body to continue such programs and practices that he put in place which have been successful and have done our Organization proud in the past 12 years.

But even in the continuity of which I speak there must be some modicum of change, because the times in which my predecessors were elected were different from today: the orthodoxy of our practices today was no doubt the heterodoxy of yesterday, and for sure will be the obsolescence of tomorrow. This is not the moment to enter into detail, but I believe that in order to adapt to such difference, in order to keep this Secretariat alive and

responsive to the articulated needs of you in representation of the people of the Americas, it will behoove me to restate our mission, redefine the product we offer, and re-engineer those parts of the management of programs and resources that need it. It must be a management that is prudent yet innovative, one that knows how to focus and one that knows both how to subtract as well as to add as the times and circumstances warrant.

I am a product of my culture, and an integral part of that culture is our sport—our national game is cricket, a team game, whose seminal rule is fairness. In a metaphoric sense I am assuming the captaincy of a team, and I do so with a consciousness burned into me almost from birth that captains are as good as the teams they lead. I believe that in our Secretariat we have a good team, and an important, though not the only, responsibility of the leader is to bring out the best in every player and have every one see that the final result must be greater than could be achieved by the sum of the individual efforts.

What else can you expect of me? I can promise you that in this Director you will have a person who is sensitive to the individual needs of countries, alert to the variation that exists between and within countries, and ever conscious of the standards of ethical conduct that must guide an Organization like ours. I can pledge that you will have a Secretariat that lives the motto of service—a service that is not servile, a service that is transparent, a service that is as timely and efficient as human heads and hands can make it, a service that is guided by frank and open dialogue between those who serve and those who are served. You will see your Secretariat make every effort to maintain or increase its diversity to reflect the face of our countries—diversity of sex, ethnic and national origin. You will see your Secretariat serve all the

countries of the Americas—from Baffin Bay to Cape Horn—countries large or small, continental or insular—different, yes, but united in the grand design of contributing each from its strength to improving the health of all our people.

We will spare no effort, ignore no suggestion that will enhance the cohesiveness and focus of our programs. There must be no doubt in anyone's mind that while we will continue to advocate positively or even aggressively for the understanding of the concepts of the proper place of health and for action in relation to our environment, we will not ignore the efforts that must be made to apply those health technologies that have stood the test of scientific inquiry.

I would like to think that one of the reasons you have elected me is because you share some small part or perhaps all of that vision I have of our world—one which I have articulated to some of you before. I have for a long time been gripped by a vision of a world in which there is no "otherness" in health. We may accept differences in physical characteristics, we may accept differences in ideologies, but in a very real sense in the case of health there should be no "others" because we are indeed one, bound together by ties that go beyond our biology. For that vision to be realized we will have to use well that most powerful of modern instruments—information—perhaps the only instrument that can close the gap between the world that is and the world that might be—the only instrument that can relieve the ignorance of many of our people, who pay the cost of that ignorance in the coin of ill health and suffering. In this world that might be or will be, our citizens will truly see that health is for living and agitate that they be allowed to live in the fullest sense of the word.

I extend my hand in cooperative friendship to all the agencies, institu-

tions, and organizations that would work with us in this enormous task of assisting the peoples of the Americas in their quest for the best of health. Experience has shown me that if the goals of our countries are clearly stated and plans accurately drawn without the petty consciousness of turf that serves no purpose other than to compound inertia with ineptitude, it is possible for us to work together and achieve together.

In a few months my name will be placed before the Executive Board of the World Health Organization to be appointed the Regional Director of that Organization for the Americas. I pledge that I will do all in my power to discharge that responsibility in such a manner as will bring credit to the Americas; I will seek to have others understand and respect the traditions and practices that have evolved over our 92 years, and hopefully contribute through sharing of knowledge and

experience to ensuring that the world's health goals and objectives are achieved. I cannot in fairness speak of team spirit in the Americas and not try to translate this thinking to the global scene.

Distinguished Delegates, you have given me your support today and I ask for it during the course of my administration. With your support and council and with the help of the dedicated and competent band of men and women who serve their people through the Pan American Health Organization I will strive to ensure that our aspirations for the health of the Americas become realities.

And if you ask me for a bond and a surety that I will make every effort humanly possible to discharge my promises, I can only say to you, I give you my word.

*Washington, D.C.
28 September 1994*



Americas Declared Free of Wild Poliovirus Transmission

The International Commission for the Certification of Poliomyelitis Eradication in the Americas (ICCPE) has concluded that wild poliovirus transmission has been interrupted in the Americas. That announcement was made on 29 September 1994 by Dr. Frederick Robbins, President of the ICCPE, in a presentation to the delegates of the XXIV Pan American Sanitary Conference and a panel of distinguished guests.

The goal of eradicating poliomyelitis in this hemisphere was first proposed by PAHO's Director, Dr. Carlyle Guerra de Macedo, in May 1985. Through the com-

mitment of the countries to intensive vaccination and surveillance efforts, and with the strong support of several agencies and organizations—in particular, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Inter-American Development Bank (IDB), Rotary International, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Canadian Public Health Association—the number of polio cases in the Region plummeted throughout the late 1980s. The last confirmed case occurred in Junín, Peru, in August 1991.

In 1990 PAHO established the ICCPE as an independent commission to over-