
Director's Letter



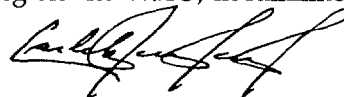
NINTH GENERAL PROGRAM OF WORK OF WHO

One of the tasks of the Forty-seventh World Health Assembly in May was to discuss and ultimately to approve the Ninth General Program of Work of the World Health Organization for the period 1996–2001. This program—which will guide WHO into the next century—was extensively reviewed by the WHO Secretariat and by the regional committees and the WHO Executive Board during the drafting process. It is noteworthy that the WHO program of work sets the same course that has been adopted by PAHO/AMRO as the framework for preparing its own strategic orientations and program priorities.

The WHO program of work identifies four major program orientations. The first is the integration of health and human development into public policies. This coincides with PAHO's ongoing efforts to promote concern for health as an integral part of the development process in the countries of the Americas. The second major thrust is to ensure equitable access to health services. For PAHO, greater equity has been and will continue to be one of our primary goals as the countries work to transform their health systems. The third WHO orientation is health promotion and protection. The priorities identified under this heading, such as nutritional improvement, healthy lifestyles, public information, and protection of the health of high-risk groups, including indigenous peoples, reinforce PAHO's own assignment of priority to these areas. The fourth WHO orientation is prevention and control of specific health problems. The ongoing initiatives in this Region to eradicate, eliminate, or control several major diseases—ranging from poliomyelitis and measles to vitamin A and iodine deficiencies—are testimony to the countries' and the Organization's commitment to this line of action.

We in the Americas have added another major orientation, namely, environmental health, including protection and upgrading of the environment. Although this concept is implicit in the program framework and goals set forth by WHO's Ninth General Program of Work, we believe it deserves to be made explicit, since the relationship of environmental conditions to human health is intimate and multifaceted.

As defined in the Ninth General Program of Work, WHO's two fundamental functions are to cooperate directly with the countries in the development of national-level activities and to direct and coordinate international health plans; the second function serves to complement the first. The fact that the WHO orientations coincide so closely with those that the Region of the Americas has defined for itself should facilitate collaboration between the countries of this Region and WHO, in fulfillment of both those mandates.



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