



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION  
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION



**51st DIRECTING COUNCIL**  
**63rd SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE**

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**MESSAGE OF PROFESSOR SOLOMON CHERTORIVSKI WOLDENBERG**  
**SECRETARY OF HEALTH OF MEXICO**

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**26 September 2011**

Dr. Mirta Roses Periago, Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau,  
Your Excellencies, the Ministers of Health of the Region of the Americas,  
Your Excellencies, the Ambassadors,  
Distinguished Delegates of the countries and organizations that are  
here with us,  
A very good morning to all.

I am very pleased to greet you at the opening of this session as  
President of the 50th Directing Council of the Pan American Health  
Organization and 62nd Session of the Regional Committee of the World  
Health Organization.

I would like to thank this Plenary, which supported Mexico and  
entrusted it with the Presidency of the Directing Council of this important  
organization. I would also like to thank Peru and Saint Lucia, whose  
support in the Vice Presidencies enabled us to carry out the important  
commission that this Plenary assigned to us. Furthermore, my appreciation  
to the delegation of Canada for the diligence with which it attended to the  
items in the report.

We recognize the arduous efforts of the Secretariat of the Pan  
American Health Organization and especially, the Director of this agency,  
Dr. Mirta Roses Periago, to develop the agenda and contents. This augurs a  
highly productive session of the Directing Council in fulfillment of the  
Strategic Plan of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau for 2008-2012.

**Delegates**

Since the first **Pan American Sanitary Conference** in 1902, my  
country, together with the pioneering countries, has understood the need for  
a regional agency in the Americas whose spirit reflects our needs and  
aspirations and contributes to the solution of our common public health  
problems.

Over 100 years since the Organization's founding, the challenges of  
globalization for national health systems reaffirm the importance and  
significance of this imperative.

One of those challenges is **chronic noncommunicable diseases**. A few days ago I had the opportunity to address the United Nations General Assembly during the High-level Meeting on these diseases to thank the CARICOM community for its initiative in bringing such a critical priority issue for our Region before that important international forum.

On this occasion, I would like to reiterate my thanks to my fellow CARICOM ministers for such an important initiative. Through collective international action, it has found the necessary unity in the Region of the Americas to enable us to confront this threat not only to the health of our peoples but to the sustainability of our health systems, as we stated in the *Ministerial Declaration* of the Americas for the prevention and control of chronic noncommunicable diseases and obesity, establishing an international reference for a comprehensive policy that distinguished us as a region.

By mandate of the Directing Council, this year the Member States had the opportunity to participate actively in the analysis of the Region's health situation, discuss potential solutions to the health problems that most afflict us, share experiences with each country, strengthen the comprehensive vision of health, and buttress public health and social measures designed to tackle the problems affecting the American hemisphere.

Our efforts were especially geared to developing **multilateral instruments** for improving the quality and safety of our hospitals; upgrading the competencies of health workers; strengthening immunization programs with the best coverage to contribute to the elimination and control of vaccine-preventable diseases and accelerate the reduction of infant mortality; and consolidating health authority governance in the area of medicines and biologicals.

Special mention must be made of the regional effort to boost national capacity for implementation of the current *International Health Regulations*. It will not only enable the countries of the Region to continue timely and appropriate reporting of the illnesses that the Regulations themselves designate for compulsory notification, but will provide the procedures for combating the diverse factors that put the health of individuals and communities at risk.

Furthermore, recent years have made clear the importance of communication and concerted action among sister countries for protecting global public health, seeking always to avoid disruptions in international travel and trade.

In this regard, we thank PAHO for its effective support through the Regional IHR Focal Point to ensure that every country in the Region will be in a position to use this valuable instrument by next June.

The Region of the Americas now has better means to confront the threats stemming from natural disasters and emerging and reemerging diseases, in addition to those connected with our countries' demographic and epidemiological transition, such as chronic noncommunicable diseases, the HIV epidemic, traffic deaths, and addiction to psychoactive substances.

Even though we have a good definition of the direction that policies should take and the best cost-effective interventions, we have not managed to **reduce inequality** in our countries and the Region. This calls for us to improve our strategies and focus our attention especially on groups in vulnerable situations, which has been a basic tenet of this Organization's work to promote achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Mexico has underscored the importance of providing genuine support for the exercise of right to health to improve the quality of life of all Mexicans. Its **National System for Social Protection System in Health**, which guarantees access to health services for the entire population regardless of employment status, has helped to fight poverty and reduce the social equity gap. This year, we will have 51.3 million members, which, added to the 50 million people covered by Social Security institutions, will enable us to guarantee public health services to over 100 million Mexicans.

All of these actions will enable us to serve the most vulnerable groups in our society, providing universal coverage for the leading causes of death in children, including all types of cancer; maternal and perinatal health care; and universal antiretroviral coverage for the treatment of HIV/AIDS, to name but a few of the interventions related to the Millennium Development Goals.

This progress fills us with pride, but also commits us to its consolidation, centering on: the quality and warmth of the care provided by health professionals; the shift toward a preventive approach in our actions; the ability of the entire population to exercise this right; and the overcoming of the challenges faced by the National Health System to achieving sustainability and meeting the needs of present and future generations.

The **global financial crisis** has implications for income, the social determinants, the number of people who will require subsidized medical care, and the health sector budget.

Social investment in general is one of the first budget lines to feel the effects of economic instability.

The budgetary constraints to improving public health in the Region demand that we continue to develop innovative, effective, and sustainable strategies; invest more in programs for disease prevention and health promotion; and take advantage of the lessons learned and interventions that have already proven successful.

I would like to thank all of you, the Member States, for your active and committed engagement to successfully conclude the work programmed during this Organization's 50th Directing Council. Your voices were heard loud and clear

It is to your contributions that we owe the positive outcomes obtained, which I am certain will not only benefit the peoples of our Region but contribute to the modernization of PAHO's administration and the strengthening of its leadership.

My sincere thanks to Dr. Mirta Roses and her excellent team for their dedicated efforts and strategic vision in leading this Organization.

My congratulations to the Minister of Panama, the next President of the Directing Council, who I am sure will be very successful in managing the work that brings us here today.

Thank you once again for Mexico's opportunity to serve at the helm of this Governing Body.

Finally, I would like to state that Mexico reaffirms its commitment to continued participation in this important discussion and policy coordination forum, where joint action is undertaken to overcome the problems and risks to public health that confront our societies.

Thank you very much.