



**Pan American
Health
Organization**



**World Health
Organization**

REGIONAL OFFICE FOR THE **Americas**

55th DIRECTING COUNCIL

68th SESSION OF THE REGIONAL COMMITTEE OF WHO FOR THE AMERICAS

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**OPENING REMARKS BY THE OUTGOING PRESIDENT
OF THE PAHO DIRECTING COUNCIL, DR. VIOLETA MENJÍVAR
MINISTER OF HEALTH OF EL SALVADOR**

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**26 September 2016
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**55th Directing Council of PAHO
68th session of the WHO Regional Committee for the Americas**

Good morning,
Members of the Head Table,
Ministers and Secretaries of State,
Delegations of the Member States and representatives of invited agencies:

In this opening session, I would like to give a warm and cordial greeting to the delegations of the countries of the Americas and offer our congratulations to the governments for another year of progress in the protection, promotion, and care of the health of our populations.

Like every year, our work agenda will have positive impact on the health situation in our countries. In this session, I will hand over the presidency of the fifty-fourth Directing Council. At the personal level, as Minister of Health of El Salvador, I am proud to have been able to hold this position. El Salvador has developed an ambitious and unprecedented process of health sector reform, with valuable contributions by PAHO/WHO.

El Salvador now has a road map for Universal Access to Health and Universal Health Coverage, a commitment taken on by all the public institutions that compose the National Health System. With the valuable support of PAHO/WHO we are very close to presenting draft legislation to the National Legislative Assembly for the creation of an Integrated National Health System: an initiative to correct the fragmentation and segmentation that persists in our health system.

In the context of progress in health system reform, we are very pleased to report that El Salvador has participated actively in the implementation of the International Health Regulations; for example, by reporting congenital Zika virus infection, cases of microcephaly, and cases of Guillan-Barré Syndrome associated with this infection.

Through the implementation of Integrated Vector Management, stratified alerts at the national level, social participation and mobilization, and the use of predictive mathematical models, we have been able--in the middle of the rainy season--to dramatically reduce the number of cases of dengue, chikungunya, and Zika in our country.

Regarding HIV infection in our country, we have reduced the number of new cases, we are on track to eliminate vertical transmission, and we do not have a waiting

list of people who know their diagnosis but still require antiretroviral treatment. In accordance with UNAIDS guidelines and with the support of USAID, we have studied investment scenarios for a more effective, efficient, and sustainable national response.

El Salvador is committed to maintaining and continuing to improve the levels of vaccination coverage that we have achieved.

We are committed to promoting the appropriate use of antimicrobial drugs, facilitating an intersectoral approach to strengthening resources and achieving synergies in order to contain drug resistance.

We are working to promote healthy lifestyles and preventive interventions, early detection, timely treatment, and palliative care of chronic noncommunicable diseases.

El Salvador is making extraordinary efforts in the struggle against the various forms of crime and violence that negatively impact health. We are developing policies and programs for violence prevention and care for victims.

In the recent United Nations General Assembly on Sustainable Development, the President of the Republic, Salvador Sánchez Cerén, expressed a firm commitment at the highest level to support the 2030 Global Agenda and to achieve its 17 objectives, with a view to making our country and the world a better place to live.

We congratulate PAHO/WHO and its Directors for preparing an institutional strategy to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. And we invite all Member States and international cooperation agencies to promote the mobilization of financial and human resources needed to meet the desired targets.

I urge the Member States of the Region the Americas to make appropriate use of the valuable technical and scientific contributions made year after year at the meetings of this Directing Council and WHO Regional Committee.

It is our greatest desire that the discussions held during this fifty-fifth Directing Council of PAHO and sixty-eighth WHO Regional Committee are highly successful for the the health of the population of the Americas.

Thank you very much.
