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**OPENING REMARKS BY MRS. IDELI SALVATTI
SECRETARY OF ACCESS TO RIGHTS AND EQUITY
OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AMERICAN STATES**

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The Millennium Development Goals resulted in many significant achievements, but they have been uneven. In Latin America and the Caribbean--not the poorest region, but the most unequal--several challenges persist.

The number of people living in poverty in Latin America and the Caribbean increased by 7 million in 2015, rising from 168 million to 175 million (ECLAC). Furthermore, in the current economic context, it is estimated that a further 1.5 million people will fall into poverty by the end of this year. Millions of households could return to conditions of poverty, possibly affecting up to 30 million people (UNDP).

Poverty in our hemisphere is marked by gender, race, and age. For example, 80% of people of African descent earn less than US \$2 a day, representing 40% of the total population living in poverty. About 8.5% of the population are indigenous people and they account for 14% of people living in poverty and 17% of those living in extreme poverty.

Inequality not only refers to unequal distribution of income and wealth. It can also be seen in terms of many gaps in opportunities, access to quality goods and services, and human development, both between and within countries. This has an impact on the enjoyment of human rights, mainly affecting mainly those who are most vulnerable.

The adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in September 2015 laid the groundwork for global development in the next fifteen years.

The 2030 Agenda sets forth 17 new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and 169 targets to be reached. It addresses a great variety of issues with the aim of establishing stronger links between the social pillar and the economic and environmental pillars of sustainable development. This ambitious program calls upon all countries to commit themselves to taking action to implement the SDGs.

The 2030 Agenda puts equity and social inclusion at the top of the development agenda, urging us to take immediate action.

At the OAS, Secretary General Almagro's new vision raises the social component to the highest level and understands the 2030 Agenda to be a new paradigm for achieving true development with equity, in order to “leave no one behind.”

This is why, in 2015, the Secretariat of Access to Rights and Equity was created in order to assist Member States in their work to achieve more inclusive and more equitable societies from a perspective of rights.

In this way, the OAS hopes to help address the Region's pending social issues, in harmony with the 2030 Agenda and using the existing instruments and mechanisms at the Inter-American level.

At the same time, joint multisectoral efforts are essential. Accordingly, we have been implementing various joint initiatives with PAHO, following the Health in all Policies approach and emphasizing the issues of social inclusion and equity contained in the 2030 Agenda.

In 2014 we agreed to strengthen our ties of cooperation to promote the formulation and implementation of policies for social protection and for more equitable, integrated health systems in order to advance toward universal health coverage.

In July 2016, during the 3rd Ministerial Meeting on Social Development, held in Paraguay, we promoted discussion among various actors on the issue of social inclusion and health in all policies.

Last August, we signed an interagency partnership to strengthen our collaboration as we jointly accompany and support the countries of the Region in the attainment of the SDGs, particularly those that address equity and social inclusion as common challenges for the Region.

This is a first step as the Inter-American system and the United Nations system move together toward achieving inclusive, equitable, and sustainable development that is consistent with the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Finally, we call on the Ministers of Health present here today to support our work for coordination and joint efforts, in order to ensure the maximum impact as we address serious inequities and also equitable access for the most excluded population.

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