

Closing Ceremony

Dr. Steven Ault, Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)/World Health Organization (WHO), Washington, D.C.; Dr. João Batista F. Vieira, Secretariat for Health Surveillance (Secretaria de Vigilância em Saúde; SVS), Ministry of Health (MoH), Brazil; Dr. Humberto Montiel, PAHO/WHO, Costa Rica; Dr. Teresa Solano, Director of Epidemiology, MoH, Costa Rica

The Secretariat initiated the closing ceremony by asking Dr. Vieira to contribute a few words, followed by Dr. Humberto Montiel, and Dr. Teresa Solano, Director of Epidemiology of the Costa Rican MoH, who would make the final closing remarks.

On behalf of PAHO and the Communicable Diseases Unit, he thanked the Costa Rican MoH for the wonderful hospitality that they showed the meeting group and noted the warm feeling of camaraderie that developed in the course of the meeting. He also expressed the group's appreciation for the opportunity to learn more about the Costa Rican lymphatic filariasis (LF) program and the apparent elimination of LF transmission. He then passed the microphone to Dr. João Batista Vieira, Chairman of the Regional Program Review Group (RPRG).

Dr. Vieira thanked everyone for their participation and noted the myriad of problems requiring innovative solutions in the near term, especially for colleagues in some countries in the region (e.g., Haiti). He noted that much work would be required in the upcoming year, emphasized the important of management aspects, and reiterated that program coordinators should always be conscious of their role as leaders.

Dr. Montiel said it had been a true pleasure to interact with the meeting group, which he praised for their dedication and conscientious embrace of the values of the national Programs to Eliminate Lymphatic Filariasis (PELFs) in the Americas region, and for taking responsibility in terms of carrying out their goals, which he said he expected to be achieved. He also thanked PAHO for supporting the process in all countries in the region, particularly Costa Rica.

The Secretariat presented Dr. Teresa Solano, Director of Epidemiology at the Costa Rican MoH, representing the Minister of Health, to offer the closing words of the meeting.

Dr. Solano apologized for not having spent more time at the meeting due to work obligations (some related to dengue, which has hit Costa Rica very hard recently) and said she wished she could have spent more time at the meeting. She congratulated the group, commended Dr. Ottesen for his meeting summary, and said the advance all the countries had made were significant and reflected a lot of hard work over the past year. She assured the group that Costa Rica would follow up on the agreements made at the meeting, that they took the comments of Dr. Pou very seriously, and considered it their obligation to both maintain the current stage of elimination in the country and initiate a new phase—that is, keep the country free of the disease and define how they should maintain strict monitoring and surveillance to ensure the achievements made thus far would be sustained. She added that despite the participants' busy meeting schedule she hoped they were able to see a little of the country before their departure, welcomed them to visit again at any time, and wished them a safe trip back to their home countries.

The Secretariat declared the 6th Regional Program Managers' Meeting (RPMM) closed and said he would look forward to the group's participation in the 7th Meeting the following year in Trinidad & Tobago. He reminded the group of the remaining activities of the RPMM meeting that evening—the dinner and delivery of the letters of recognition to the MoHs of Costa Rica, Trinidad & Tobago, and Suriname, which would start at 8:00 pm in the room downstairs from the work group rooms. He concluded his comments by thanking the MoH of Costa Rica, all meeting participants, and the meeting content translators.