

Office of the Director



Dr. Mirta Roses Periago

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Dr. Mirta Roses Periago is the Director of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the world's oldest public health agency, founded in 1902, which is also the Regional Office for the Americas of the World Health Organization (WHO). In September 2002, Dr. Roses was elected Director of the Pan American Sanitary Bureau by the countries of the Hemisphere and she took office on 1 February 2003 for a five-year term, serving as the first woman to head the world's oldest international health organization. In September 2007, she was reelected to another term as Director of the Organization and has been reappointed as Regional Director for the Americas by the World Health Organization's Executive Board.

Prior to assuming this office, she served two terms as Assistant Director of PAHO (1995-2003). Dr. Roses has vast international experience in public health, having worked for more than two decades on behalf of the countries of the Americas, actively participating in global efforts in epidemic control, equity in health, social promotion, and health regulation.

The first woman to serve as Director of this century-old institution, Dr. Roses Periago has promoted a work philosophy that links consensus building with the forging of partnerships to attract new social actors to the defense of health, focusing efforts on achieving visible improvements in the health situation of the countries, support for priority countries, strong promotion of equity in health with the decentralization of resources targeted to national priorities, and care for neglected populations. This reflects the strategic framework that she has developed to organize the technical cooperation of PAHO around three major objectives: addressing the unfinished agenda in health, maintaining achievements, and tackling new challenges.

Before assuming office in 2003, she served as Assistant Director of PAHO, forming part of WHO's Directors of Programme Management Group (DPM) and the Global Programme Management Group (GPMG), which she chaired for two periods. As Assistant Director, she was responsible for the direct supervision of all PAHO/WHO Representative Offices in the Americas.

She also served for seven years as PAHO/WHO Representative in the Dominican Republic (1988-1992) and Bolivia (1992-1995), developing technical cooperation programs that have been widely recognized in the Region and gaining vast and successful experience in putting public health at the center of human development priorities.

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Her international professional experience includes her work both as coordinator of the Epidemiological Surveillance Unit of the Caribbean Epidemiology Center (CAREC) in Trinidad and Tobago (1984-1986), where she provided service to all the Caribbean countries, and as an epidemiologist in the Dominican Republic (1986-1988).

Dr. Roses Periago also has an extensive history of service in public health at the national level, working in epidemiology and health research in Argentina's Ministry of Health (1977-1984) and in primary health care programs in the city of Buenos Aires (1974-1976).

Her service to the community has included teaching in the Departments of Preventive and Social Medicine and Infectious Diseases at the *Universidad Nacional de Córdoba*, Argentina, (1969-1974), her work at the Hospital Provincial Dr. Guillermo Rawson in that same city, and her work as part of the National Team for Research on Hemorrhagic Fever in Argentina (1972-1973).

Her intense work to improve public health has been widely appreciated and recognized, both inside and outside the Americas. In Spain, she was honored with the Civil Order of Health; in Bolivia, with the Order of Health Public, the Order of Marshall Santa Cruz (Armed Forces), the Agricultural Medal of Merit, and the Order of Bolívar the Liberator; in Ecuador, with the Decoration of Merit in Public Health and the *Honorato Vásquez* National Order; in Nicaragua, with the *José de Marcoleta* Order and the *Pedro Joaquín Chamorro* Order of Freedom, in Dominican Republic, with the Order of Merit of *Duarte, Sánchez and Mella*; and recognition by the Legislature of the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires in Argentina. She was elected Vice President for Latin America (2007-2008) of the American Public Health Association (APHA).

In the academic sphere, she has been named Professor *honoris causa* by the *Escuela Andaluza de Salud Pública in Granada*, Spain; the *Universidad Mayor de San Andrés*, Bolivia; the *Universidad Tecnológica Equinoccial*, Ecuador; the *Universidad de San Marcos*, Peru; and the *Universidad Autónoma de Santo Domingo*, the Dominican Republic. She is a full or honorary member of numerous professional associations. Dr. Roses is an active member of the *Sociedad Boliviana de Salud Pública* and the *National Academies of Sciences, International Advisory Board, USA*. She is also a national corresponding member of the *Academia Nacional de Medicina, Argentina*.

She has received a doctorate *honoris causa* from the *Universidad Nacional de Córdoba*, Argentina; the *Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana de México*; the *Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua en León*; the *Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia*, and the *Universidad Central del Este*, Dominican Republic.

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Dr. Roses Periago has been honored by the Legislature of the city of Buenos Aires; the School of Public Health of the *Universidade de São Paulo*, Brazil; the Universidad de Antioquia, Medellin, Colombia; and the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare of Paraguay. She has been proclaimed a Distinguished Citizen of Córdoba, Argentina, and a Distinguished Guest by the cities of Quito, Guayaquil, Cuenca, and Manabí, Ecuador; San Salvador, El Salvador; Guatemala; Managua and Masaya, Nicaragua; Montevideo, Uruguay; and Panama.

She received her medical degree from the *Universidad Nacional de Córdoba*, Argentina, in 1969, completing her specialization in tropical medicine at the *Universidade Federal de Bahia*, Brazil, in 1971. Her graduate studies also include a certificate in public health (1974) and a specialization in epidemiology (1982) at the *Escuela de Salud Pública* in Buenos Aires, Argentina, as well as the specialist degree in clinical medicine and epidemiology of infectious diseases at the Universidad de Buenos Aires, in 1976.

Dr. Roses Periago is a citizen of Argentina and speaks five languages: Spanish, English, Portuguese, Italian, and French.

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