

# Foreword

*To accomplish great things, we must not only act,  
but also dream; not only plan, but also believe.*

Anatole France (1844–1924)

**I**n late 2002, the Pan American Health Organization asked Dr. Marcos Cueto to write a history of PAHO. This book is the result of that assignment. Its pages tell of more than a century of uninterrupted work in the field of public health aimed at preventing, controlling, and eradicating disease and promoting health.

The history of PAHO is the work of men and women who proved their idealism, knowledge, dedication, and resolve. That work, across generations, has made it possible for millions of people in the Americas to enjoy a healthier life. The achievements are, in large part, the result of the technical cooperation of PAHO with its Member Governments.

The past century saw impressive advances in health that are worthy of being told here. We are proud of having made and maintained, in the majority of the countries, noteworthy progress in the field of public health, and of having helped to reduce mortality rates and to extend life expectancy. All of this has been accomplished despite successive and protracted economic and political crises and the unacceptable social exclusion of major population groups that have affected our countries throughout their history.

This work recreates the voices of the Organization's members and all the public health workers of the Americas who devoted themselves, generously and enthusiastically, to promoting health and protecting life. The eight Directors who have preceded me paved the way for excellence in service and transparency in administration. They were building an austere, careful institution, protective of its human resources and the collective capital of knowledge accumulated in collaboration with the countries.

By reading this history we can again affirm, without fear of error, that our Organization has a solid foundation. Health workers everywhere have devoted themselves to achieving the established goals and demonstrating the value of health in its contribution to reducing poverty and achieving a more equitable, sustainable human development. Its leaders have

geared the collective actions to ensure success, and our partners and allies have supported us and entrusted us with financial and technological resources to help us to accomplish our objectives.

I hope this book will help us remember the past, respond to the present, and, above all, continue to plan for the future. As Director Emeritus Dr. George A. O. Alleyne once noted, “the past is always prologue.” In other words, the history we are building today is always the most important.

Dr. Marcos Cueto has done an excellent job. His meticulous thoroughness in choosing the countless sources consulted and the resulting extensive bibliography are complemented with a lively and entertaining narrative that together make this book a lasting contribution to the history of our beloved Pan American Health Organization.

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Director