



PAN AMERICAN HEALTH ORGANIZATION
WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

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**REMARKS OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE PAN AMERICAN SANITARY BUREAU
AT THE OPENING OF THE PHOTO EXHIBIT COMMEMORATING
“WELLNESS WEEK IN THE AMERICAS”**

Dr. MIRTA ROSES PERIAGO

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Dr. Mirta Roses Periago

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Achieving health for all is a dream we all share, and the beauty of it is that we can all help make it happen. High-level political and government policymakers, like those who could not honor us with their presence today, can do it, and so can academic research institutions and think-tanks, such as the World Economic Forum, so well represented here by Eva, and others, both in this city and in our countries. And of course, so can public health workers and professionals.

Nevertheless, certain challenges must be taken up by all sectors of government and society as a whole. The silent epidemic of noncommunicable diseases, which has devastating health, economic, and social impacts, is a challenge that can only be met by a concerted effort. Effective public policies are needed, but we must also be willing to make lifestyle changes essential for preventing these diseases, as well as to participate in the collective effort as members of the community.

This is the rationale behind Wellness Week. Through the leadership displayed by the Caribbean countries with the Declaration of Port-of-Spain in Trinidad and Tobago, the United Nations High-level Meeting one year ago, and Caribbean Wellness Day, this social movement has been gaining ground. Therefore, we are very pleased to have with us the Minister of Health of Guyana to represent this social movement, which began in 2008 and which has been an inspiration and a model.

As the photos in the exhibit show, we can all follow their lead. We can all take an active part in the work of preventing diseases and mitigating the impact of this silent epidemic. These beautiful pictures show us people from the Americas of different ages and conditions and from different contexts and places who are asking for and appreciate the opportunities they are offered to adopt healthy habits, eat right, and exercise. Let's enjoy this exhibit, intensely promote these good examples, and devote our creativity and energies to Wellness Week in the Americas, this year and every year!

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