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International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, 9 August 2013

Message from PAHO

The Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) celebrates the observance of the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples with all the indigenous peoples of the Americas and around the world. This observance is specifically to honor those treaties and agreements that encourage respect, inter-culturality, harmony and peace. Health and development are part of these aspirations and, as such, we join you to promote stronger alliances towards shared goals, which include universal health coverage.

The rights of indigenous peoples across all areas of human endeavor must be respected and protected, and their participation guaranteed in formulating any decisions that affect them. Experiences abound across the Americas of efforts to address the health of indigenous peoples within a social determinants construct. Land rights, access to potable water, education on family planning, drought and malnutrition and mental health are just some of the intersections we address in order to promote stronger alliances and honor treaties within a climate of equality, diversity and universality. In our Region, some sobering statistics continue to hold our attention and demand the need for more targeted actions to improve the health of indigenous boys, girls, men and women, whose needs are often different.

- According to the 2010 census, in eight countries, the **total fertility rate is higher in indigenous women than nonindigenous women**. In some countries, the rate doubles.
- The 2000 census data for 17 countries show that **indigenous peoples** (under 18 years of age) **have less access to drinking water**: between 34% and 95%, whereas for nonindigenous peoples under 18 it ranges from 11% to 67%.
- Suicide rates among indigenous young people can be four times higher than the rate among nonindigenous young people (PAHO Fact Sheet).

PAHO Resolutions CD50.R8, CD46.R16 and CD47.R18 — Health and Human Rights, the Gender Equality Policy and Health of Indigenous Peoples, respectively — are our frameworks for collaboration and the promotion of actions to build capacities on intercultural health; fostering strong networks among indigenous peoples; increasing access to integrated and culturally sensitive health services; adopting consensus on traditional medicine; working closely with human rights commissions at the United Nations, the Organization of American States and with academia; and generating and utilizing disaggregated data that reveal inequalities and inequities among the indigenous peoples of the Americas.

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PAHO reiterates its commitment to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, to our resolutions on the health of indigenous peoples and to the integrated approaches framed by our other health-related resolutions. I embrace the challenges to improve the health conditions of indigenous peoples of the Americas. To this end, we have adopted cultural diversity as a cross-cutting theme for our health and development work. I call on our partners to join our efforts as we move this agenda forward with more collective monitoring and accountability.

PAHO would like to convey its best wishes to all indigenous peoples around the world. You can count on PAHO's support and its partnership. Happy International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples!